

"URBAN ETHNICITY": CULTURE AND POLITICS AMONG ERITREAN AND
EGYPTIAN MIGRANTS IN MILAN

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that "ethnicity" can be seen as the interplay between culture and politics in a specific social context. It compares the ethnic identity and organization of two migrant groups, Eritreans and Egyptians, in Milan and their contrasting relationship with the "host society". It also assesses the theoretical significance of "cultural strategy", "social closure" and the "social construction of race", evaluating their significance for the concept of "ethnicity". The main method adopted is that of qualitative participant research.

After a description of the social and cultural background of emigration and of the context of arrival, the thesis analyzes the main differences between the two groups in terms of patterns of employment, legal situation and housing. While these differences may partly be explained by the two groups' different demographic structures, social networks and ethnic identity, the crucial difference is in their different patterns of leadership, organization and political contacts with the "host society". The Eritreans have a high attendance at their "ethnic institutions" because their leaders have been able to draw support from and to establish contacts with, sections of the "host society" in order to find employment, to obtain sojourn permits and to gain access to public housing. By contrast, the Egyptians have a low attendance at the religious institution that they share with other Muslims, not only for ideological reasons, but also because of the institution's relative lack of resources. Instead, intermarriage is one of the main avenues of social advancement.

The thesis concludes that "ethnicity" can be seen as a "usurpatory cultural strategy" in relation to the racist ideologies and "exclusionary" practices of the "host society". For the Eritreans it involves the stressing of cultural distinctiveness and social enhancement at a group level. For the Egyptians it involves concealment of cultural difference and social enhancement pursued at an individual level.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ACLI (Associazione Cristiana dei Lavoratori Italiani) Italian Workers Christian Association
- CIGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) Italian General Confederation of Labour (mainly Communist)
- CESIL (Centro Solidarieta' Internazionale Lavoratori) Centre of International Workers' Solidarity
- CISL (Confederazione Italiana dei Sindacati dei Lavoratori) Italian Confederation of Workers' Union (mainly Christian Democrat)
- DC (Democrazia Cristiana) (Christian Democratic Party)
- ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front)
- EMASI (Ente Milanese Assistenza Solidarieta' Integrazione) Milanese Centre for Assistance, Solidarity and Integration)
- EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front)
- ISS (International Social Service) UN-sponsored organization for political refugees
- MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) Italian Social Movement (neo-fascist party)
- PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano) Italian Communist Party
- PLI (Partito Liberale Italiano) Italian Liberal Party
- PRI (Partito Repubblicano Italiano) Italian Republican Party
- PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano) Italian Socialist Party
- TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front)
- SICET (Tenants' Union)
- UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro) Italian Union of Labour (mainly Socialist)
- WPE (Workers' Party of Ethiopia)

PREFACE

This thesis falls within the broad field defined as "ethnic relations" and in particular within that of "urban ethnicity". These topics have been tackled, from different angles, by a multitude of scholars within the social sciences -sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, political scientists and others- producing an enormous amount of material. Although this thesis addresses some of the major theoretical questions that emerge from the literature and tries to challenge the conventional usage of certain concepts (including "ethnicity" itself), it raises as many questions as it attempts to answer. What may be novel is the interdisciplinary approach adopted in the treatment of these questions. This reflects in part my undergraduate background, having read for a B.A. in Anthropology and Geography at University College London, and in part a theoretical concern that, without such an approach, important issues will be missed out. As a result, contributions that have emerged from the fields of geography, anthropology and sociology will be adopted.

My interest in this topic arose from reading Abner Cohen's Customs and Politics in Urban Africa (1969). I was fascinated by the idea that the "cultural-symbolic" dimension (including "ethnicity"), rather than being just an "archaic" survival of the past, was also an important factor of the politico-economic process. His concepts will be discussed and their relevance tested in the context of my own study.

The "ethnic groups" (Eritrean and Egyptian) and the "urban context" (Milan) selected for this research probably does constitute an absolute novelty, at least for the Anglo-Saxon tradition in this field of study. The novelty lies not so much in the study of two "ethnic migrant minorities" like the Eritreans and the Egyptians, but that the context is a country like Italy. Within the field of anthropology, Italy has generally been studied as an "underdeveloped" country, either by looking at Italian migrants abroad, or by studying small rural communities in Southern and Central Italy, within the field of "Mediterranean studies" (1). As Kerzer (1983) points out, from the literature it often seems that Italy is a nation of peasants living in remote and desolate villages. On the other hand, this study looks at Italy in terms of features it has in common with other "western industrial" countries, including the presence of migrant labour from the "Third World". For in 1986 Italy was the fifth western industrial nation in terms of G.N.P. per capita, according to The Economist (2). However it is true that this "new" type of migration (as opposed to internal migration from South to North) is a relatively recent phenomenon. Another distinctive aspect of this migration that posed particular problems for research was that, at least during the time of fieldwork (September 1984- March 1986), most of the migrants were "illegal". They therefore greeted a researcher with particular diffidence and suspicion.

Finally, another relative peculiarity of the thesis is the attempt to engage in a systematic comparison between two

migrant groups, the Eritreans and the Egyptians, in the same context, Milan. Although differences outweighed similarities, the comparative aspect is useful from a theoretical point of view. However a totally "impartial", "objective" comparison has not been possible, not only because of my own subjective feelings towards the two groups, but also because the different nature of the two groups poses different problems in each case.

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NOTES TO PREFACE

(1) See for example Boissevain (1979), Boissevain and Friedl (1975) and S.E.R.G. (1981) for a more critical approach.

(2) The Economist 24-30 January 1987: "Italy's vita gets more dolce"

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION: ETHNICITY, MIGRATION AND THE CITY.

This study examines the interplay of socioeconomic, demographic, political and cultural aspects of two migrant groups, Eritreans and Egyptians, in Milan and compares their different relationships with the "host society". The main focus is on how the two groups, in a common context and similar economic position, developed contrasting cultural strategies and styles of ethnic politics. This chapter outlines the main theoretical assumptions and propositions behind the research. It reviews the literature most relevant to the study, introduces the theoretical and methodological framework and defines the object of study.

1.1 Theoretical assumptions and propositions

Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan can initially be characterized as two migrant groups with specific "non-Italian" ethnic backgrounds. This involves both socioeconomic issues such as migration, class and employment, and sociocultural ones such as identity, ethnicity and culture. Although these two sets of issues cannot be reduced to one another they influence each other in specific situations as mediated by human practice. This thesis thus entails an examination of a range of theories that encompass different aspects of social life and adopts an interdisciplinary approach, which is recently becoming more

popular also among geographers (cf. Gregory 1978, Jackson and Smith 1984).

Some of the main theoretical concepts employed in the thesis can now be introduced.

Structuration and the habitus

Giddens' (1976) notion of "structuration", has sought to go beyond the analytical dualism that characterized much of the sociological literature (1). He argues that the production and reproduction of social life must be treated as a skilled performance on the part of social actors and not as an epiphenomenon of social structure. The realm of human agency is bounded. Human beings produce society as historically located actors. Structures are produced and reproduced through practice, which in turn is constituted structurally. Furthermore structures only exist as the reproduced conduct of situated actors with definite intentions and interests. This approach, recently also employed in geographical works (e.g. Gregory 1978, Jackson and Smith 1984, Pred 1986), is close to Bourdieu's (1977) argument that human action should not be seen just in terms of rules, epiphenomenal to the structure, but in terms of "practice" and "strategies", i.e. as "practical social mastery" that enables the individual to cope with the social world. Bourdieu synthesizes this relationship between practices and structures through his concept of "habitus". These concepts help to understand that the behaviour of Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan is partly the result of their different social and cultural backgrounds and demographic characteristics, partly conditioned by the

context of arrival, and partly the result of the practical strategies of the individuals of the two group and of the wider society. In particular it helps to understand the relationship between the "ethnic institutions" described in chapter 5, the "host society's organizations described in chapter 6 and the ethnic politics analyzed in chapter 7.

Social classes

Whereas Marx defined social classes by the unequal relationship of human collectivities to the means of production of material life (cf. Marx 1963), the relationships between social classes or between "social formations" are not simply functional to the "needs" of capital or simply reducible to the "structure" (2). Instead the maintenance and reproduction of capitalist relations should be analyzed as the result of historically specific conflicts, negotiations and alliances between classes (as well as "social formations" and various kinds of social groups), that is in terms of practice. Thus, as Gramsci (1975, pp. 119-120) pointed out: "a given political act may be a mistake on the part of the leaders of the dominant classes...(and is not necessarily) determined by the structure" (3). This thesis also draws on the distinction between a "class in itself", defined only by relations of production, and a "class for itself", defined also by class consciousness, as a class becomes a social subject only when these two preconditions are present (cf. Marx 1963 pp. 164-165). This affects the relationship between the migrants and the Milanese working class, discussed in chapters 3, 4, and 8. Moreover, the division between capital and labour is

not the only significant social division in western societies. In fact the growing importance of the service sector at the expense of the industrial sector as well as the segmentation of the labour market, have meant an increasing fragmentation of the two main social classes and the rise of new social divisions and patterns of social conflict (cf. Mingione 1981; Castells 1983). While this thesis aims to situate the migrant groups in their economic (class) context, it will argue that some of the crucial differences between the two groups (cf. chapter 7) and areas of conflict with the wider society (cf. chapter 8) lie in the sphere of social reproduction or "collective consumption".

Interest groups and social closure

In capitalist societies major social divisions and social conflicts arise from opposing interests, that do not necessarily coincide with the capital/labour dichotomy. As Parkin (1979) has argued, interest groups seek to maximize their gains by restricting access to resources and opportunities to "outsiders". He defines this process as "social closure", which can be of an "exclusionary" kind, where a social group seeks to prevent others from having access to its gains, or of a "usurpatory" kind, where a social group tries to displace another from its social gains. Crucially, social closure does not entail only a conflict in the economic sphere, but also in that of politics, status or culture. Chapter 7 will analyze to what extent it is possible to speak of Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan as interest groups employing "usurpatory strategies" and chapter 8 will analyze the "exclusionary" practices of the

"host society" (4). Social conflict is therefore of a multidimensional, rather than unidimensional, kind and relationships between social classes and interest groups may be not only of conflict but also of alliance and negotiation (e.g. Gramsci's (1975) notion of "historical bloc"). These patterns will be analyzed in chapter 6, 7 and 8.

Culture and identity

The basis of social conflict or alliance, that is of collective action between different social groups, is not dictated by socioeconomic motives alone. The fact that one can identify categories of people in terms of common relations of production or socioeconomic interests does not mean that all human beings belonging to these categories will act together with common goals. The problem is therefore to delimit the boundaries of these horizontal sets of categories (social classes, interest groups) which would identify them as active social groups. For besides the ontological importance of labour, i.e. the production and reproduction of material life by human beings, there is also the need to identify the self in the social universe (cf. Cohen, G.A., 1984, Levi-Strauss 1964a, b). Belonging to a particular group, with all the rituals, symbols and affectivity attached, provides a group identity which is a very powerful psychological factor affecting social behaviour (Epstein, 1978). Thus the analytical importance of the existence of an "us"/"them" boundary (Wallman 1979), can be said to be an ontological condition of human life. Culture can be seen as "historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbolic forms... by means of which men (sic) communicate,

perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and their attitude towards life" (Geertz 1973, p.89). When the boundaries of culture enable the individual to identify him/herself as part of an "us" vs. a "them" (usually with the presence of rites of passage at the crucial stages of the life-cycle), they also delimit identity, although it can shift with the us/them boundary (cf. Wallman 1979). The identity of Eritreans and Egyptians in their countries of origin will be analyzed in chapter 2 and their realization in Milan in chapter 5. Interest groups and social classes therefore carry out collective action also when there is the perception of a common identity. Although a social class can provide a "culture" with strong sybolic patterns, in order for a "class in itself" to become a "class for itself", class consciousness must also be coupled with a common identity. As chapter 7 will argue, this process has gone further in Milan for the Eritreans than for the Egyptians.

Culture and hegemony

But culture does not only provide a system of meanings and an identity, nor can it be reduced to an ephimenomenon of the structure and therefore treated as "ideological false consciousness". As Gramsci recognized, there are also:

"historically organic ideologies that have a validity that is psychological: they organize human masses, form the terrain on which men acquire consciousness of their position, struggle...(and these analyses therfore) strengthen the conception of historical bloc, in which material forces are not historically conceivable without form and form would be just individual whims without material forces (1975, p. 59).

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Although he still used the concept of "ideology" as opposed to that of "culture", Gramsci recognized that all "ideologies" contain an element of distortion of social reality (what may be defined as "ideology" proper) as well as a "world-view" (which may be defined as "culture"). This can be summarized by the notion of "hegemony", by which he meant that the dominant classes exert their power on the subordinate one not only through legal force, but also through consensus obtained at the level of culture to which the subordinate classes oppose their own world view (cf. Gramsci 1975, 1977). These ideas have been further elaborated members of the C.C.C.S. in Birmingham (e.g. Hall and Jefferson 1976, C.C.C.S. 1982). They provide a key to understand the different relationship between the two groups and the "host society" analyzed in chapters 6 and 7.

Culture and politics

This thesis is also centrally concerned with the relationship between culture and politics, a field that has been one of the main concerns of the anthropologist Abner Cohen (1969, 1974a, 1974 b). He has examined the dialectical relationship of the symbolic-cultural level with politico-economic processes. He argued that symbolic formations have important functions of organization, distinctiveness and "closure" to outsiders especially for interest groups (including "ethnic" groups) and that the symbolic-cultural dimension can be manipulated and transformed to achieve particular aims, even if he is careful to argue that there is an "irreducible" dimension to culture (1980, p. 81). He sees these processes as inherent to all social groups, including West Indian

minorities in London (1980, 1982). Other authors have recognized the importance of studying the relationship between symbolic-cultural and politico-economic processes. For example Pierre Bourdieu (1977) employs concepts of "symbolic capital" and "symbolic power" as an integral component of social "practices" and "strategies" while Sandra Wallman (1984) employs the notion of "non-material resources". Culture is not only a medium through which social relationships of conflict, alliance and negotiation are expressed. It also constitutes an active component of these processes. With this general framework, some of the more specific literature on "urban ethnicity" can now be examined.

1.2 Debates on the nature of ethnicity

A comprehensive review of the literature is not possible here. Instead, only works considered theoretically useful for the construction of the argument and for the specification of the object of study, will be selected.

The adjective "ethnic" is usually employed in two different contexts: where two or more culturally distinct groups contest power within the framework of a nation-state (usually giving rise to the concept of "nationalism") and where culturally distinct minority groups, usually (but not always) migrants, interact with other(s) to enhance their socioeconomic conditions, but without nationalistic aims. This analysis will be mainly confined to the second context.

While the Chicago school's pioneering work on ethnic minorities in cities was carried out within an assimilationist perspective (cf. Park 1967, chapters 6 and 8), Glazer and Moynihan (1975) have noted that, from a theoretical point of view, analyses of ethnicity have tended to fall between two poles: "primordialist" and "circumstantialist". While the second of these approaches will be analyzed later on in this section, the "primordialist" thesis assumes that ethnic loyalties are a survival from a "primitive" past (characteristic of non-western "primitive" groups) that would disappear in the process of modernization (cf. Shils 1957). However, Glazer and Moynihan (1970) found no evidence of assimilation among the various ethnic groups in New York in the 1960s. In Britain other authors have argued that ethnic groups are neither assimilating in the process of modernization (Peach, 1981) nor that they should be seen as a "survival" of "primordial loyalties" (Watson, 1977). Instead, the modern world is witnessing a massive occurrence of "ethnic revivals" (Smith, A. 1981). But, as Epstein (1978) argues, the cognitive-affective dimension of belonging to an "ethnic" group, is still a powerful element to be recognized. The notion of identity and the existence of an "us"/"them" boundary is an ontological condition of human life. The first problem that this poses, however, is how to distinguish "ethnic" identity, from other forms of cultural identity. While this will be discussed in more detail later, for it affects all the contexts in which the adjective "ethnic" is used, "ethnic" identity (as opposed to other kinds) can provisionally be characterized as one that defines a

particular group of people sharing the perception of a common history and origins, maintained by rituals at crucial stages of the individual's life-cycle (especially birth and marriage). In a sense, therefore, all human beings belong to an "ethnic group", but the term "ethnic" is socially significant only when applied to a situation of interaction between two (or more) groups, in this case between a (migrant) minority and a "host society" (4).

The second problem is, as Epstein (1978) and Wallman (1979) recognize, that the "us"/"them" boundary is not fixed, but can be maintained or transformed according to different circumstances that also affect the number of identity options available to the individual. This leads to an examination of some of the "circumstantialist" approaches to ethnicity, such as the interactionist approach, that can be traced to Park's work (Jackson and Smith, 1981). Most appropriate to the concerns of this study, even if not focussing directly on the topic of ethnicity, is Hannerz's (1980) attempt to develop an "anthropology of the city". Hannerz looks at interactions (or what he terms "purposive situational involvements") between individuals in the city in different domains of "role repertoires" (household-kinship, provisioning, recreation, neighbouring, traffic). He argues that the analyst should look at both interactions within the same domain and at relationship between the various domains and that roles are not static but can be negotiated in different interactional settings, using Goffman's (1959) theatrical approach to the "presentation of self" in society. However this approach is highly voluntaristic and based on the individual rather than

social groups. Moreover, there is very little discussion of relationships of power and conflict among social groups, let alone among social classes. Hannerz therefore comes to the disappointing and traditional conclusion about ethnicity, that it is a "role discriminatory attribute" in "purposive situational involvements", i.e. a burden, a form of "cultural baggage" in the rational conduct of human beings.

A more interesting framework, theoretically related to the above one and concentrating more on ethnicity than on the urban setting, is Barth's (1969) transactionalist approach to the study of ethnic groups and boundaries. He argues that instead of looking at ethnic groups in terms of their content or "cultural stuff" (the "cultural baggage" notion of the "survivalist" approach), we should see them as categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, organizing interaction particularly in the process of boundary formation and maintenance between different ethnic groups. In other words, an ethnic group is not defined by its internal cultural characteristics but in relation to another group. The task of the analyst is to examine the cultural differentiae, rather than the whole culture, that allow for the maintenance of such boundaries. He recognizes, moreover, that individuals might cross over and change their identity according to their interests, as their ethnic identity might be relevant to behaviour or not. In spite of these useful theoretical suggestions, Barth's approach also suffers from some shortcomings. In the first place, as Abner Cohen argues (1974a, pp. xii-xiii), ethnicity is still viewed as an essentially innate and fixed characteristic, being an

"organizational vessel", in Barth's words. If the primary process is only that of self-identification (even if in relationship to other groups) one risks stating the obvious, i.e. that ethnic groups exist because the actors say so. In this respect there is no suggestion that ethnicity can be transformed and manipulated, not only maintained, or that ethnicity operates at a group level and not only at that of the individual. Secondly, and more importantly, there is little discussion of how the process of ethnic boundary maintenance is interlinked with other types of social relationships, such as those involving political and economic conflict, as Miles (1982) argues.

A fruitful development from this perspective is that expounded by Sandra Wallaman (1979). She recognizes the significance of the "us"/"them" boundary in terms of identity and boundary maintenance and argues that ethnicity is the recognition of a significant difference between "them" and "us" that can be couched in a variety of terms, like culture, race, religion or nation (ibid., p.3). Moreover, and crucially for the perspective of this study, she also recognizes that the boundary might shift according to the circumstances set by the context or situation, which in turn depends on the interplay between structural constraints and opportunities (cf. also Mitchell 1974). As changes occur on one side of the boundary they also produce changes on the other side. The boundary process as well as ethnicity itself are "reactive". Finally, depending on the context, ethnicity can provide access to and organization of (through "ethnic gatekeepers") work and "non-material" resources like time,

information and identity (to which one might add political connections) as opposed to material resources, like capital and labour (Wallman 1982). In other words ethnicity itself can become a resource or, in Bourdieu's (1977) words, a kind of "symbolic capital". But what is crucial, is that, depending on the context, this may or may not happen. It is important therefore to define the nature of the context itself. While a more precise definition will be found in the next section, it can be anticipated that the context will include socioeconomic (interest groups and social classes), political (power groups, parties, etc.) and cultural (hegemonic ideologies and cultural discourses) factors.

Finally, sharing some elements of the above perspective, but placing more emphasis on the political dimension of ethnicity at the expense of the cultural-identity one, there is Abner Cohen's work itself. The previous section has already reviewed Cohen's "two-dimensional" approach to the study of human society with his notion of the "dialectics of politico-symbolic interdependence" (1974b) and his dramaturgical approach to the study of the "chain of sociocultural causation" (1980, 1981). In his earlier works he applied these concepts, from a slightly different perspective, to the study of ethnicity. In his seminal work (Cohen 1969) he distinguished between "ethnic groups" and "ethnicity", stating that (p.4):

an ethnic group is an informal interest group whose members are distinct from members of other groups within the same society in that they share ... compulsory institutions like kinship and religion ... make use of extensive moral and ritual obligations that bind its members in order to organize its political functions ... Ethnicity refers to the strife between such groups, in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness".

This is because symbolic formations are seen by Cohen as very powerful elements structuring relationships, largely unconsciously, through the psyches of the actors, referring ambiguously to different meanings (1974a, 1974b). More importantly, they can be manipulated according to political functions.

This often involves stressing distinctiveness from other groups making up the society in which they are interacting. This can be done in a variety of ways: by stressing common descent, by developing kinship relations, by forming religious or voluntary associations that would exclude "outsiders", and for a variety of purposes, like economic entrepreneurship, by the development of moral solidarity and trust and structures of decision-making and authority (Cohen 1969, 1974a, 1974b). Ethnic groups are seen as interest groups making use of "cultural strategies" (or what might be called "ethnicity") in their struggle for economic and political power. The advantage of these strategies is that they often lead to the development of "informal organizations" that allow the group to articulate its interests even if in a minority situation when formal

political strategies are insufficient because of their lack of (formal) power. Cohen has applied this method to a variety of cases and in particular to the Hausa settlers in Ibadan who, through a kinship network and membership of an Islamic sect, monopolize a trading network of cattle and kola nuts (Cohen 1969) and to the Creoles of Freetown who, through membership of a Masonic lodge, manage to retain control of the professions and of the civil service, even if in a situation of (formal) political weakness following decolonization (Cohen 1971, 1981). In both cases Cohen argues that in a situation of relative weakness of (formal) power, political and economic interests can be articulated through "cultural strategies" that involve the manipulation of cultural distinctiveness. He applied this framework also to Western case studies, like the City of London businessmen (1974a, 1974b) and, dropping the emphasis on the political-interest oriented aspects of these processes for a notion of culture in terms of resistance to subordination, to Afro-Caribbean minorities in London (1980, 1982).

Cohen is not the only scholar to see ethnicity in situational and political terms and ethnic groups as interests groups. For example, Glazer and Moynihan (1975) also see ethnic groups primarily as interest groups, Bell (1975) analyzes them in terms of a combination of affective ties and interests, and Lloyd (1974) sees power and wealth as the main sources of ethnic competition. However Cohen seems to be the most consistent and imaginative exponent of the "political-circumstantialist" approach to ethnicity and he is careful to avoid economic reductionism also taking into

account the cognitive dimension of ethnicity. His notion of cultural strategy may be criticized for sounding too deliberate and voluntaristic, but Cohen argues that symbols operate in their political functions largely unconsciously through the psyches of the actors. When the Muslim Hausa of Ibadan

... gather in a congregation to pray on Friday, they do not say: Let us pray in order to consolidate the weakening position of the chief, or to enhance the moral distinctiveness of the community. They are mostly unaware of these functions, their motives in performing the prayer being mixed and varied, often having nothing to do directly with politicking (Cohen, A. 1974b, p. 53).

His argument that the cultural-symbolic forms are an inherent parts of politico-economic processes and of struggles of resistance is appealing and is part of the theoretical framework of this thesis. But the argument that ethnic groups can be seen as interest groups adopting cultural strategies that always involve the stressing and dramatization of cultural difference, seems difficult to generalize, as ethnicity can also be a liability, depending on the context (cf. Wallman 1979, Epstein 1978). This does not deny the symbolic-cultural dimension of social subordination and politico-economic processes or, to use Cohen's terminology, that a "cultural strategy" will not be adopted. But this might involve concealing, rather than stressing, cultural difference. This calls again for a closer look at the context of "ethnicity", in terms of class structure (cf. Miles 1982), and of the relationship between the "ethnic" group and other interest groups and with the dominant political forces and cultural discourses of the "host society".

1.3 Ethnicity in context

Any group defining itself in opposition to others and making use of cultural distinctiveness, following the above approach, may be defined as an "ethnic" group. In this sense, punks, mods and skinheads, among others, may qualify as an ethnic group. Indeed, on many counts they are. Cohen's City of London businessmen come from a distinctive social background, have been to the same schools, dress in the same way and speak with the same accent, allowing them to develop relationships of trust through which informal transactions are carried out (Cohen, A. 1974a, 1974 b). In this sense they are very similar to the Hausa of Ibadan and are therefore as "ethnic" as any ethnic group can be. However, what characterizes "ethnic" as opposed to other kinds of groups, is not only cultural distinctiveness, which can be couched in a variety of terms (e.g. religious, linguistic, etc.), but also a separate sense of descent from the other groups with whom they are interacting (given the caveat that boundaries may shift overtime). Usually this pattern is reinforced by rites of passage at crucial stages of the life-cycle of an individual, like birth and marriage, which define in-group membership. However Miles (1982, pp. 61-67) argues that what characterizes "ethnic" groups is the position of their members as subordinated labour migrants. Even though his call to look at the structural context is commendable, it must be recognized that one can speak of "ethnic" groups and "ethnicity" not only in this situation, as e.g. the Sierra Leone Creoles case shows, for they have a perception of separate descent and cultural distinctiveness, maintained

through elaborate rituals and yet occupy mainly middle-upper class positions (Cohen 1981). This pattern applies to a certain extent also to Jews in Britain and in the USA who, in present times, are mainly concentrated in the commercial and financial sector and in the professions (cf. Kosmin 1979, Glaser and Moynihan 1970, Steinberg 1981). The overlap between class and ethnic boundaries maintains and reinforces ethnic differences as the class struggle largely coincides with ethnic interest. In the two situations mentioned above, this overlap occurs at an upper class level and the ethnic groups employ "exclusionary" strategies (Parkin 1979) to preserve their position. This situation also leads to a potentially high degree of ethnic conflict.

But in looking at the context of ethnicity, the main focus will be on "ethnic" groups at the bottom of the social ladder. In the first place many minority "ethnic" groups, including Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan, can be characterized from a socio-economic point of view as labour migrants (Miles 1982). Labour migration theory will therefore be briefly examined.

Labour migration theory

In examining migration, the literature classically distinguishes between "push" and "pull" factors of migration. However this conception is rather empiricist, for processes leading to emigration in the zones of exodus are affected by processes leading to immigration in the zones of arrival, like the penetration of capitalist relations in the countryside and international division of labour (cf. Roberts

1978, Miles 1982, Reyneri 1979, Gilbert and Gugler 1983) (5). For example it is not by chance that many immigrants to European countries come from ex-colonies (cf. Rex and Tomlinson 1979 and Miles 1982). Moreover it is now well established that migration is not a random process affecting mainly people at the very bottom social strata of the zones of exodus, but that it is a selective process (age, sex, financial resources), structured by networks of kinship, friendship, etc. (cf. Reyneri 1979, Roberts 1978). This has led the above authors to characterize the migration process as a "migration chain". Although this approach is analytically useful, it also has the danger of overemphasizing the direct connections between "push" and "pull" factors all functional to the "needs" of capital and to treat the migrants as mere "rings" of a chain, rather than also as subjects who make decisions. Finally, especially in the early phases of settlement, it is important to identify the pattern of migration since it determines important "structural" aspects of the group, like size, age-structure and sex-ratio. This applies particularly to the situation of Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan.

Looking more into the labour side of the labour migration theory, many authors agree that labour migration was very advantageous economically to the countries of arrival since it met a shortage of labour in the unskilled-semiskilled industrial manufacturing sector at very low costs of social reproduction (education, housing, social security) (cf. Reyneri 1979, Giner and Salcedo 1978). This has led some authors to claim that immigrants can be considered as part of

the working class, even if a "divided" one (cf. Castles and Kosack 1973) or as constituting a "fraction" of the working class (Miles 1982). This might have been true of a particular historical period, i.e. the industrial boom of the 1950s and 1960s in Europe and in the USA in an earlier period (cf. Gordon 1964). This situation may potentially lead to assimilation, as belonging to the working class, with all the political and symbolic meanings attached to it, can provide a strong identity option for the migrants. This pattern partly applied to the "ethnic" European migrants in the USA (Steinberg 1981) and to most West Indians who came to Britain with no specific sense of a separate identity (Cashmore 1979), entered the working class and supported the trade unions (Rex and Tomlinson 1979). Subjectively at least, they would have felt assimilated as their struggles and goals would have largely coincided with those of the class they belonged to. This could be the classical scenario for a "succession/assimilation" ecological model. However, even in this case the "rank sequence" can be violated (cf. Light 1981), as the case of Puerto Ricans in New York demonstrates (Jackson 1981).

This pattern does not apply equally well to later periods. With the economic crisis and industrial restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s, migrant workers, more than native ones, were made redundant or forced into the lower service sector (cf. Rex and Tomlinson 1979, Reyneri 1979). Moreover, many migrants entered directly into the lower service economy or carried out economic activities associated with the "petty bourgeoisie". With sojourn permits tied to job contracts

and with the lack of support from the trade unions (cf. Giner and Salcedo 1978, Portes 1977, Reyneri 1979), they were likely to be a more "flexible" pool of labour, rather than a militant one claiming wage increases. These processes have been connected with a transformation in the structure of the labour market where from a situation of competition among workers for employment (the "reserve army of labour") a situation of separate labour markets developed (cf. Piore 1979). This is because, on the one hand, the industrial sector has experienced a transformation with the introduction of labour saving technologies which required relatively more skills such that unionized workers who retained their jobs became more difficult to fire. On the other hand, there has been a persistence and growth of small-scale non-unionized economic activities (cf. Paci 1981) and of the many sectors of the service economy that could not be reached by technological innovation (eg. catering, cleaning), which have been mostly filled by migrants (cf. Mingione 1984, pp. 238-240). A "central" "protected" working class has emerged as opposed to a "marginal" "unprotected" one. Finally there has also been a growth of a relatively skilled and "protected" service economy either in the private sector, paralleling economic innovation, or in the public one due to the greater amount of state intervention in the economic field. A "segmented" labour market has developed (cf. Mingione 1981 pp. 55-63) or, in relation to migrants, an "ethnic division of labour".

These concepts have profound implications for a characterization of the migrants in terms of class, as well

as for patterns of social consciousness and conflict. Discounting those migrants who enter the petty bourgeoisie (small business, etc.) and cannot be regarded as part of the working class, it seems pointless to consider the host of "coloured" migrants that work as cleaners, waiters, caterers in fast-food shops, etc., as part of the working class (even if a "fraction" of it) as Miles (1982) does, simply on the grounds that they sell their labour power. This does not meet the second condition for a marxist characterization of the working class, namely that besides selling wage labour (the precondition for a "class in itself"), workers must also have a degree of class consciousness, through unionization, etc. (the precondition for a "class for itself"). It is in this situation of exclusion from the class structure of the "host society" (6) that ethnicity can become a resource for upward mobility, mainly through self-employment and ethnic enterprise. This has been true of the earlier phases of Jewish migration to Britain and The USA (cf. Kosmin 1979, Steinberg 1981) and of Pakistanis in Britain who, to a large extent, concentrated in small-scale business (cf. Dahya 1974, Aldrich et al. 1981). These groups can be analyzed as interest groups employing "cultural strategies" (cf. Cohen 1969, 1974a, b) of a "usurpatory" kind (cf. Parkin 1979). However "ethnicity" might not work only in relation to employment but also in relation to "urban goods" such as housing, health and education, as the case of Eritreans in Milan will show.

Not all groups excluded from the class system (that is not to say from the productive system) manage to articulate as

interest groups employing apt "cultural strategies", as they may lack adequate "ethnic resources". This is not to argue that these migrants do not have any political consciousness, culture or bases of collective action, nor to slip into racist notions of "pathological cultures" (cf. Lawrence 1982a). On the contrary, the specific character of their consciousness, in the absence of a class one, constitutes an important topic of enquiry. For example, the exclusion of West Indians from British society helped to bring about a transformation of their identity into a Rastafarian one (cf. Cashmore 1979). This had the function of creating an identity alternative to that of the society which discriminated against them, but also that of a specific "ritual of resistance" to the hegemony of white British society (cf. Hall and Jefferson 1976, C.C.C.S. 1982). This development can be seen in the evolution of the Notting Hill Carnival from a "polyethnic" feast of peace and amity, to one dominated by Rastafarianism and reggae music (cf. Cohen 1980, 1982).

The case of Egyptians in Milan falls between this situation and that described in the above paragraph. On the one hand they lack the "ethnic resources" enjoyed by Eritreans. On the other, although there is a specific pattern of discrimination against them, even if as Muslims rather than as Egyptians, they have a higher rate of intermarriage with the local population. But it is also possible that their "ethnicity" will transform towards that of an interest group employing "cultural strategies" in the economic sector as well as "rituals of resistance", also as Muslims rather than as Egyptians.

Urban managers and urban conflict

Another aspect of the definition of the structural context, after migration and the labour market and class relations, concerns the specifically "urban" aspects of the problems. Without reviewing the whole debate on the specificity of "the urban" (cf. Saunders 1981), the focus shall be on those aspects most pertinent to the argument and to the topic of enquiry mainly either from weberian or from neo-marxist approaches, between which a common ground can be found at an epistemological level (cf. Jackson 1983b, Elliott and McCrone 1982). One can agree with Fahl (1975) that there are some key individuals in the city with some degree of discretionary power over the distribution of vital resources such as housing. These he calls "urban managers" or "gatekeepers". They are to be found especially in the public sector (local state) but also in the private one (e.g. building societies). This is important for the topic of study because, as Rex and Moore showed (1967), institutional constraints in the public sector exclude recent immigrants from access to public housing, forcing them into low status and overcrowded tenancies. The main discriminatory factor is therefore related to the weberian notion of bureaucracy, rather than to the marxist one of relations of production.

Secondly, a body of neomarxist work, largely stemming from Castells' work (1976, 1977, 1983), has focussed on the growth of social conflict in the area of "collective consumption" or "social reproduction" of labour power (Mingione 1981), that is mainly (public) housing, education, transport, health,

etc., as opposed to struggles in the area of "production" (the "classical" class struggle). This was linked to the growth of state intervention in this area (the welfare state) at the local level and to its subsequent crisis, therefore (also) to the complex relationship between the central and local state. This focus of analysis has been retained even by authors who have distanced themselves from the Althusserian overtones of Castells' work (7) adopting a generally "left-weberian" approach (cf. Saunders 1981, Dunleavy 1980). From a similar perspective, but with a different emphasis, Elliott and McCrone (1982) have looked at the city as an arena of conflict between social groups, involving political as well as economic inequalities and employing the concept of "social closure" referred to above. These notions will be employed in chapters 7 and 8 when analyzing the "usurpatory strategies" of the migrants groups vs. the "exclusionary" ones of the "host society".

Hegemonic cultural discourses

Finally, the hegemonic cultural discourses (cf. Gramsci 1975, Foucault 1972) of the "host society" must be examined for two reasons. In the first place because, as Miles (1982) argues, it is important to characterize the ideological legacy affecting the "host society"'s attitude towards the immigrants, i.e. the extent and character of an ideological tradition of racism. Among these it is important to mention the existence and type of a colonial past (Lawrence 1982a) and of a tradition of antisemitism, but also historical attitudes towards other minorities as well as other religions. It is also important to characterize the context

from a cultural point of view since conflicts and alliances between social groups are also established at the cultural level, affecting also the migrant groups. For example, the political connections that a group establishes with the "host society", will in part be conditioned by the extent to which it can fit with the dominant cultural discourses of the "host society". The extent to which the cultural identity of an (ethnic) group can be manipulated to suit its needs and aims, is limited to the point at which its members will continue to identify themselves as members of that group. Again, there are important differences between Eritreans and Egyptians in these respects.

The meaning of and difference between "ethnic" group, identity, and "ethnicity" can now be defined more precisely. An "ethnic group" can be defined as a group of people interacting with other collectivities in a common social system, identifying itself as different from them, sharing some pattern of normative behaviour through some compulsory institutions, leading to a greater rate of in-group interaction and to some degree of collective action. In this respect it is important to distinguish, according to McKay and Lewins (1978), between "ethnic category", which is ascribed from the outside, and "ethnic group", as the two might not coincide. "Ethnic identity" may be defined as those aspects of a group's culture (sense of common history, religion, language, etc.) that allow for the affective identification of the group's members in a section of the social universe and at the same time help to establish an "us"/"them" boundary, maintained through some rites of

passage. This is not to deny that even within an "ethnic" group itself, there might not be some "ideological" aspects (in the marxist sense of a distortion of reality by a particular interest group or social class) (cf. Larrain 1979), but that it would be practically difficult to distinguish it from the positive aspect of the term. Finally, "ethnicity" can be understood as the dynamic expression in social action of cultural difference for particular social, economic and political goals (often not explicitly conscious) or, to use Cohen's term, a "cultural strategy". However, "ethnicity" or the usage of "cultural strategies" might involve the stressing of cultural difference in order to manipulate an internal trading network or control sought-after professions (8), but also, depending on the context, to resist sociocultural hegemony or to establish political links with sections of the "host society" or to conceal it altogether.

The above discussion constitutes only a sketch of an analysis of "ethnicity in context". It might help to avoid the twin mistakes of engaging in "economistic" explanations, attempting simply to "read off" these patterns from the class structure, or in "culturalist" ones, looking only at cultural values and identity. It also highlights how, as different groups dramatize, maintain or conceal their ethnic identity, both "assimilationist" and "pluralist" perspectives, holding that the "host society" can accommodate different ethnic groups and preserve ethnic differences (cf. Clarke et al. 1984), must be qualified (cf. Steinberg 1981). However no account can be produced without engaging in specific

analyses, as the outcome of "ethnicity" will also be determined by the practical strategies of the individuals, power holders and collectivities involved in these processes. The pragmatic strategies in the pursuit of the resources available within the structure of opportunities of the "host society", involving "cultural strategies" and ethnic organization, is what may be termed as the "political" dimension of ethnicity.

1.4 Segregation and racism

Two further concepts that define the context of ethnicity, namely segregation and racism can now be reviewed.

Segregation

As a starting point segregation can be defined as the rate of deviation of a selected population as compared to another population and/or the normal or random distribution (Boal 1978). One can agree with Harvey (1973) that in contemporary western societies segregation and ghetto formation are inevitably linked to the workings of the capitalist mode of production as a whole, but the specific significance of segregation must be determined for particular (ethnic) groups in historically and socially specific situations. For example, segregation, of which the ghetto was the ideal-typical form, changed from being a normative and compulsory institution as in the case of Jews in Europe up to the 19th century (Wirth 1928), to a situation determined more by socio-economic factors and discrimination, as in the case of many ethnic minorities in contemporary western cities (9).

On the other hand, Rex and Moore (1967) analyzed the residential segregation of black immigrants in Sparkbrook, Birmingham, in terms of the institutional discrimination they faced from building societies and the local authority that forced them into the lodging houses of the "twilight zone" in a situation of overcrowding. Despite the fact that their concept of "housing class" has encountered theoretical criticism (e.g. Saunders 1981), their approach is of some interest for the specific concerns of this thesis, both because they identify a relationship between ethnic groups as interest groups defined in terms of housing (which is, to a certain extent, the case of Eritreans in Milan) and because it allows to look at segregation not only in spatial terms but also in terms of types of housing.

However, as Dahya (1974) argues in the case of Bradford, the residential segregation of Pakistanis is not so much the result of institutional discrimination but of "choice", since it is more suited to develop the kind of "ethnic enterprise" related to their particular articulation of "ethnicity". This argument is also forcefully applied by Cohen (1969) in relation to the Hausa in Ibadan, who are spatially segregated from the rest of the Yoruba population, as part of their "cultural strategy" to articulate their trading network. However, as Brown (1981) argues, this choice/constraint dualism can be overcome by looking at both structural subordination (on the part of the "host society") and forms of cultural negotiation and strategies of resistance (on the part of the "ethnic" groups). Thus while Boal (1978) argues that the ghetto can have "positive" functions for the ethnic

group, Ward (1983) warns that when there is no possibility of upward mobility, the ethnic ghetto becomes a cul de sac rather than an elevator.

Racism

Racism should also be analyzed within specific historical and social circumstances as it might change form accordingly (cf. Hall 1980, C.C.C.S. 1982, Sinvanandan 1983). Secondly, as Miles (1982, pp. 76-77) argues, we should distinguish between racism at the ideological level and at the level of social practice as in both cases the socioeconomic context is crucial. For example, with respect to the Jews in the Middle Ages, racism was couched mainly in religious terms and at the level of social practice compulsory segregation was the main form of discrimination. From the mid-19th century to the end of the Second World War it was constructed in biological terms with notions of "racial inferiority". This meant that conversion to Christianity was no longer, as in the Middle Ages, sufficient to escape persecution. At the level of social practice genocide as opposed to forced conversions, for example) was a consequential outcome. This emergence of biological racism can be related not only to developments in the physical sciences but also to the rise of capitalism and the nation-state in Western and Eastern Europe (cf. Mosse 1980).

This "classical", ideal-typical form of racist ideology, based on the supposed determination of behaviour by genotypical characteristics, which would be reflected by "phenotypical" traits, has been amply criticized as having

no proven scientific validity (cf. Miles 1982). At the level of popular discourse in contemporary western cities, such a deterministic conception of race in terms of "biological inferiority" is no longer the dominant form of conceiving "the other", with the notable exception of South Africa where "race" is still the ideological basis for institutionalized discrimination. But while the "classical" form of racism is less relevant nowadays, discrimination against "the other" acquires new forms both ideologically and at the level of social practice. These changes have to be related to socioeconomic developments from the introduction of a money economy in Middle ages Europe, to the introduction of slavery and the expansion of colonialism and finally to labour migration in contemporary capitalist countries. In post-war Britain, for example, Commonwealth migrants were and are discriminated against through ideological notions of "alienness", "criminality" and "disreputable lifestyles". They are blamed for their "social failures" through the pathologization of black families and through the concept of "deprived cultures", reproduced in the media (cf. Solomos et al. 1982, Lawrence 1982a, 1984b). The fact that the (ex)migrants were physically distinct from the "native" population, has led some academics to maintain the validity of a field of study defined as "race relations".

In this case "race" is conceived of in "phenotypical" terms, of which colour is usually the most important (cf. Smith, M.G. 1986). However one must agree with Miles (1982) that "race" is a socially constructed ideology, historically specific, deterministically ascribing negatively-valued

characteristics to an out-group, used to justify the denial of access to material resources and political rights. In order to analyze it, one should therefore trace both the ideological legacy to understand the current set of symbols and stereotypes that contemporary racism builds upon and the structural position of the peoples who are the "objects" of racist ideologies and discriminatory practices, even if the two might not be deterministically related. With regard to the ideological legacy, both Miles (1982) and Lawrence (1982a) point out the importance of the colonial past. To this must be added the attitude to the so-called "Jewish question", around which much continental racist discourse was constructed. With regard to the structural position, it is important to determine the inclusion/exclusion of the migrants within the "native" class system, as opposed to a simplistic identification of migrants within the working class at all costs. For example, in the case of inclusion of the migrants within the working class and in the context of economic recession, competition for jobs and the ideological stereotypes mentioned above, could lead to discriminatory practices in the field of employment, i.e. to the sacking of migrants. This is, to an extent, what happened in countries like Britain, France and Germany in the 1970s. In other contexts, such as the case of Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan, discriminatory practices in a segmented labour market are justified by racist ideologies in the field of "social reproduction". In both case this leads to a "heating up" of "ethnicity" and to "social closure" on both sides of the boundary (migrants/"host society"), as argued before. Therefore "racism" can be seen as the "ethnicity" of the "host

society" in a specific context, even though the different balance of power gives it different implications.

1.5 Object of study and thesis outline

The object of study can be specified by different degrees of generalization. At a very general level this thesis is an analysis of the significance of "ethnicity" for two migrant groups, Eritreans and Egyptians, in an urban context, Milan in Italy. This involves looking at both sides of the "ethnic" boundary, that of the migrant group and of the "host society", i.e. the context. The characterization of "ethnicity" for the two groups, in terms both of cultural resources and strategies and of political practice, for the two groups, will be the main focus of the thesis. This becomes relevant in a context where ethnic resources are crucial in the absence of class ones. The second main focus will be to see how these processes affect the groups' relationship with the "host society", both in terms of the resources they manage to draw from it and the kind of social relation it entails, e.g. of assimilation, integration or conflict. For "ethnicity" does not work in the same way for every group in every context. Its dynamics can be seen at the boundary between the "ethnic group" and the "host society", while the various factors accounting for the specific character of "ethnicity" can be found in the analysis of the various constituting components of both the ethnic group and the "context". These theoretical issues have been examined in the present chapter.

The character of "ethnicity", the patterns of ethnic identity, the causes of migration and the social composition of the migrants will be analyzed in chapter 2. They have specific implications both internal to the groups and for their relationship with the "host society". Thus, for example, the nationalist-radical and Christian identity of the Eritreans will have a different effect on the internal cohesion of the group as well as on patterns of alliance with sections of the "host society", than the Muslim identity of the Egyptians.

The socioeconomic context and the legal framework controlling foreign immigration broadly determine which economic and housing sectors the migrant groups will occupy and the inclusion/exclusion from the native class structure. The hegemonic cultural discourses of the "host society" will also affect the pattern of possible social relations between its various sections and the two immigrant groups. Thus, for example, the fact that Catholicism and radicalism have played a major role in Milanese society will be of great significance for the possible patterns of relationship between it and the two ethnic groups concerned. This applies also to the pattern of political groups (parties, voluntary organizations, pressure groups, etc.) that dominate the "host society". These issues will be analyzed in chapter 3.

As far as the "ethnic groups" are concerned, the nature of the two migrant groups, in terms of size, age and sex-ratio, will also be assessed. The first hypothesis is that a relatively small population, with a differentiated age and sex-ratio, will have a higher degree of ethnic cohesion and

interaction, due to the greater amount of face-to-face contact, intra-ethnic family groups and endogamous marriage. On the other hand, patterns of employment and housing will be only to a certain extent determined by the "structural context": different groups can find different niches because of the nature of the migration process, and because of their different cultural strategies and political practices. Different patterns of employment, housing and various aspects of "social reproduction" (education, health, places of socialization and worship) between Eritreans and Egyptians constitute one of the main points of interest in analyzing the dynamics of their "ethnicity". These patterns will be analyzed in chapter 4.

These factors also affect the different strength of the solidarity network, organization and leadership between the two groups and the different attendance at their respective "ethnic institutions". Although the character of these institutions is influenced by the hegemonic cultural discourses in the countries of origins, certain transformations in their cultural forms and in the composition of followers suggest that they are not mere carry-overs but also respond to the new context. The different character of the attendance at Eritrean and Egyptian "ethnic institutions" also influences the possibility of group-wide collective action. These issues will be examined in chapter 5.

Finally, the main argument will be presented concerning the characterization of the specific patterns of "ethnicity" or "ethnic politics" of the two groups. This will involve

looking at both the internal patterns of organization and leadership of the two groups and external ones of alliance and/or conflict with sections of the "host society". The latter aspect can also be seen in the different attendance of Eritreans and Egyptians at the various voluntary organizations dealing with Third World immigrants in Milan. This is conditioned not only by the different character of the two migrant groups vis a vis the services these organizations can offer, but also by the political contacts they can offer, at least in the Eritrean case, as argued in chapter 6.

The main hypothesis is that while the group with a higher degree of organization and political links with certain sections of the "host society", i.e. the Eritreans, will be able to make use of their "ethnicity" to gain some benefits from the "host society", the group that lacks both of them, i.e. the Egyptians, will not be able to use their "ethnicity" and instead will conceal it, or at least downplay it. Both cases involve "cultural strategies", but whereas in one case this happens in a "positive" way (i.e. by stressing difference), in the other it happens in a "negative" sense (i.e. by concealing it) leading to intermarriage and eventually assimilation. In the first case the ethnic group can be characterized as an interest group (even if defined more in terms of items of social reproduction and political links, rather than employment). In the other case much less so. However there may be a redefinition of the Egyptian identity, in terms of a Muslim fundamentalist revival, that might provide an internal articulation as an informal interest group, but with Islam, rather than with Egypt, as

the common denominator of identity. All this will be argued in chapter 7.

In both cases, organization, leadership and alliances with sections of the "host society", as well as collective action and mobilization, will be crucial. These can only to a certain extent be related to the factors identified above (the nature of the migration, the character of identity, the presence of "ethnic institutions"). They will also be the outcome of practical strategies of individuals achieving positions of power. This, and the assessment and pursuit of options and resources available from the host society, is what may be termed the political dimension of ethnicity, in a situation where "formal" politics are not available because of exclusion. "Ethnicity" cannot be "read-off" from pre-existing "structural" or "cultural" features, but can be examined only by engaging in concrete analysis. Following the theory of structuration it can be said that ethnicity as a cultural strategy and form of political practice is a skilled performance that is mediated by features such as identity, institutions and alliances, which in turn are also the outcome of these practices.

Finally, the relationship between the ethnic groups and the "host society" will be analyzed from the other side of the boundary. From this point of view "ethnicity" can be seen as a usurpatory "cultural strategy" on the part of the ethnic groups, while "racism" can be seen as an exclusionary "cultural strategy" on the part of the "host society". In this respect two things will be shown. First, that racism as an ideology justifying discriminatory practices need not be

couched only in biological terms, but also in sociocultural ones (the context in which it occurs being crucial, especially in the presence or absence of conflict over employment and/or services). Secondly, that while the ethnic politics of the two groups are different, as well as their respective "phenotypical traits", the "reaction" of the "host society" towards them is relatively undifferentiated, not least because of the recent character of the migration. These processes will be analyzed in chapter 8.

In summary, this study is about the analysis of the different character of "ethnicity" ("cultural resources and strategies" and "political practice"), with different "usurpatory" outcomes in the absence of class resources, for two migrant ("ethnic") groups. It attempts to explain these differences using the concept of structuration whereby they can be understood in terms of the different cultural and political practices of social actors, mediated by the different social, political and cultural aspects of both the ethnic groups and the "host society", which in turn are the outcome of the situated practices of the actors. A characterization of Eritreans and Egyptians in these terms and a theoretical framework for the analysis of "urban ethnicity" will be found in chapter 9. The different nature of the processes outlined above for the two groups leads to an examination of the comparative aspect of the thesis and raises certain methodological questions.

1.6 The comparative method and fieldwork techniques

The scope for comparison and methodology

It will be apparent from the thesis that differences between the Eritrean and Egyptian groups greatly outweigh similarities. However, while this is true of factors internal to the groups and of their relationship with the "host society", what they have in common is the "context" in which they are interacting. The main point of comparison is therefore that of analyzing how two groups in a similar structural context, in terms of legal and socioeconomic position, but with a different interplay of demographic, social, political and cultural characteristics, differ in their relationship with the "host society". From a theoretical point of view this means assessing the proposition that while "ethnicity" always involves a "cultural strategy", it may not always work in the same way, sometimes being stressed (as in the case of the Eritreans) and sometimes being "downplayed", not being a relevant asset (as in the case of the Egyptians).

Participant observation as immersion in the social life of the actors and sympathetic understanding and interpretation of their viewpoint, has been a classical technique of social anthropology in "traditional" settings. Recently, geographers have also called for its usage in urban contexts (e.g. Jackson 1983a). Of course, participant observation does not exclude other techniques of enquiry, such as surveys, and a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is desirable. Transposing this method from the "traditional"

small-scale settings that allowed the researcher to have a "holistic" grasp of the society under study to a complex urban setting poses certain problems (cf. Wallman 1984, Burgess, 1984). These are due to the quantity, complexity and fragmentation of social relationships in the urban context. In a city the "participant observer" cannot claim to "observe" the daily life of all the members of a particular group. Problems of statistical representativeness may also be raised. However, as Mitchell points out in his discussion of case and situation analysis, "the validity of extrapolation depends not on the typicality or representativeness of the case, but on the cogency of theoretical reasoning" (1983, p. 207). Case studies therefore represent a useful methodology when they can illuminate the context in which they occur in a logically coherent theoretical framework.

Fieldwork techniques

In the present context, significant quantitative data on the two immigrant groups (e.g. from a census) were unavailable, given the fact that a great proportion of the migrants were illegal and therefore undocumented. Legislative documents of the Italian state and of the Milanese municipality have been examined to determine their attitude towards Third World immigration. Data from the few available statistical sources were supplemented by interviews with "ethnic leaders" and social workers and with data available from certain voluntary organizations dealing with Third World immigrants. The latter also gave important suggestions in terms of the differential attendance at them by the various migrant groups, both about the nature and requirements of the various types of migrations and about the network of political contacts

between the two groups and certain sections of the "host society". Access to these organizations has been facilitated by having carried out ten months part-time community work in one of them (EMASI-ACLI, see chapter 7) as part of my national voluntary service. This also allowed me to establish useful contact with members of the two ethnic groups that were involved with the association.

Secondly, and more importantly, participant observation at events organized by the various "ethnic institutions" was carried out, trying to analyze the attendance at them by members of the respective ethnic groups. The different rate of rites of passage (i.e. births and marriages) performed in the relevant "ethnic institutions" of the two groups was also analyzed. This was important in order to establish not only patterns of identity and solidarity, but also potential bases for collective action and political processes, both in terms of internal organization and leadership structure, as well as in terms of political connections with the "host society". Thirdly, out of the relatively large number of short-lived "encounters" in these settings ("ethnic institutions" and voluntary organizations), a few "cases" were selected, using criteria that included theoretical relevance and availability for interviews. In this respect the Egyptian group, more fragmented and less organized than the Eritrean one, presented more problems for research. While in the Eritrean case acquaintance with ethnic leaders and the existence of a tight network gave access to many people, in the Egyptian case an atomized network meant that acquaintance with one person did not give access to many more. This has led to a

greater emphasis on the Eritreans in the thesis because of the greater availability of data.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews with field-notes, but without the use of a tape-recorder (because of the suspiciousness of the "clandestines"), were carried out with about 30 Eritreans and 20 Egyptians. Questions relating to age, origin, identity and, more importantly, attitude and relationship to "ethnic institutions" and the "host society", were put forward. Silences, especially on the second two questions, were considered as eloquent as answers. In many cases, cross-validation through participation in the "ethnic institutions" and longitudinal studies (sometimes involving socializing) was possible as well as examining the rates of intermarriage with the local population from the municipal statistics. For the theoretical reasons mentioned above and because of the fact that respondents did not always answer "sensitive" questions, a questionnaire-based survey was not carried out. Finally the attitude and reaction of the "host society" to the presence of these two migrant groups has been evaluated through recording statements made by ordinary people, participation in places of common interaction (e.g. bars) and through an informal survey of various newspapers. Fieldwork lasted from September 1984 to March 1986.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

(1) Cf. Perlman (1976) for a critique of the tradition of theoretical dualism in sociological analysis.

(2) As in the "structural-marxism" of Althusser and Balibar (1979).

(3) Translations from Italian quotations are my own.

(4) Despite the paternalistic and potentially racist implications of the "host society" concept (cf. Castles and Kosack 1983), it is employed here for its descriptive value.

(5) The terms "push" and "pull" will, however, still sometimes be used for their descriptive value.

(6) In a contemporary capitalist urban context, three major social classes can be tentatively identified: 1) the capitalist upper class (owners of capital, professional bourgeoisie, financial and commercial bourgeoisie); 2) the middle-class (intellectuals, civil servants, white collar workers); 3) the working class (industrial workers and unionized workers in the public service sector, e.g. transport).

(7) But cf. his "Afterword", in Castells (1976), for theoretical revisions.

(8) As for, respectively, the Ibadan Hausa (Cohen 1969) and the Freetown Creoles (Cohen 1981).

(9) South Africa is, of course, a notable exception.

(10) Cf. Miles (1982) and Mosse (1980), for a more detailed account of the racialization of the Jews.

CHAPTER 2: THE BACKGROUND TO EMIGRATION

This chapter compares the socioeconomic, political and cultural background of the respective areas of emigration of the Eritreans and the Egyptians, assessing which of the above factors has been more significant to their migration. This helps to identify some of the major social characteristics the migrants bring with them to Italy and the degree to which these characteristics are preserved or modified. It is hypothesized that the context of arrival will determine some changes in the migrants' cultural identity, but that the character of their identity prior to migration will have some significant implications for the strength of ethnic solidarity and for the relationship with the "host society". After a brief introduction on some general social processes in the so-called "Third World" affecting both Eritrea and Egypt, this chapter will contain a section on the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia in terms of centralizing cultural and historical forces and separatist nationalist ones. It concludes by assessing the influence of Islam and class differentiation in Egypt and the bearing this has on Egyptian migrants in Milan.

2.1 Urbanization and nationalism in the Third World

Eritrea and Egypt fall between the traditional object of study of the social anthropologist, i.e. segmentary societies, and that of "Orientalism", which have both encountered recent criticism (1). However the anthropological

approach still has some major strengths. Among these is the method of fieldwork and participant observation leading to an empathetic understanding of the people studied, from the actors' point of view. This has been usually achieved through ethnography, one of whose main strength was to consider the various parts composing the society under study, not in isolation, but in relationship to each other.

From the late 1960s social scientists from other disciplines urged anthropologists to look at the relationship between "developed" and "underdeveloped" societies. Among them Andre Gunder Frank (1967) has argued that development in the capitalist "core" is functional to underdevelopment in the "dependent" "periphery". Wallerstein (1979) has attempted to characterize the world economy as an integrated system dominated by capitalism in which the capitalist "core" is supported by "peripheries" and "semiperipheries". During the 20th century, according to these authors, colonialism (experienced by both Eritrea and Egypt), based on a system of servile labour, was replaced by "neocolonialism" through multinationals. Even though these approaches have the major faults of seeing everything as functional to the "needs" of capital and of portraying the peoples of the "peripheries" as passive "puppets", they have the merit of drawing attention to some major social processes that the fuller integration of "Third World" countries have experienced in the last two centuries. Among these, the processes of urbanization and the development of nationalism are most significant in this context.

The process of urbanization greatly increased with the penetration of capital in the countryside and the migration of small peasants to the cities. This fuelled both urban growth and urbanization, that had already begun on a large scale in the Third World with colonialism (cf. Roberts 1978, Gilbert and Gugler 1981). Currently the "Third World" is experiencing a faster rate of urbanization than the "developed" world, with Latin America being at present the most urbanized area and Africa the fastest growing one. Although a small number of migrants were absorbed by the "formal" industrial sector and a larger number by the "informal" service sector or "petty commodity production", many remained unemployed or underemployed. It is mainly from this surplus of population in the urban areas of the "Third World", rather than straight from the countryside, that most of the migrants to urban centres in "developed" countries originate, being more socialized to urban life and having greater opportunities for long-distance migration. However, migration from Mediterranean areas (at least southern European ones) to northern European cities seems to have been a more direct one from rural areas (Reyneri 1979). It is therefore important to assess the urbanization rate of the two areas of origin, to understand the migratory potential and its character. While "Ethiopia" (including Eritrea, which is not yet an internationally recognized state) is a relatively little urbanized country, with 15% of its population living in urban areas, the same is not true of Egypt, where the figure is 45% (2). Some authors estimate the urban population in Eritrea at 20% (3), although recent conflicts have caused a constant flux of population from the

countryside to the towns (mainly Asmara) and from there abroad. It can however be concluded that while Eritrea has only a moderate rate of urbanization, Egypt has a relatively high one.

A second major issue is that of nationalism. Nationalism is closely linked to the emergence of the "nation-state" and in particular to those situations in which the two sides of the term do not coincide. A "state" can be defined, following Weber, as a system of officials holding the legitimate monopoly of the use of force and power, involving political centralization, taxation and bureaucratic machinery. A nation can be defined along the lines of "ethnic group" in the first chapter, but with the difference that there is also a claim to political independence in a territorially defined area, involving a degree of cultural homogeneity. Nationalism can be seen as the movement of a people to build a "nation", within a territorially defined unit and with political autonomy, that is within a "nation-state". There are two main kinds of nationalism: a "separatist" one aiming to break away from the politically dominant, but culturally different "nation-state" with the aim of self-determination, and an "irredentist" one, with the aim of unifying a culturally homogeneous, but politically fragmented population. In general, nationalism is related to the emergence of the state, requiring some degree of cultural/linguistic homogeneity for the functioning of its bureaucratic machinery and to sustain social mobility and a specialized division of labour (cf. Gellner, 1981, 1983, Smith, A.D. 1981).

While Latin America has experienced relatively few nationalist tensions for various reasons (cf. Smith, A.D. 1981, pp.137-138), Asia and Africa have experienced a high degree of nationalist tensions in this century. Many authors agree that colonialism had a major impact on these areas. In many cases, the colonial powers in their "scramble for Africa", drew political boundaries around areas irrespective of their ethnic composition (cf. ibid. and Mazrui and Tidy 1984). Before the end of colonialism African nationalism was essentially of an irredentist kind in order to get rid of the colonial powers. Ethiopian resistance to the Italian invasion became a symbol of this. With decolonization, the fear of "balkanization" and of establishing economically non-viable units at the mercy of neo-colonialism, led to a tendency to preserve the colonial boundaries (cf. Mazrui and Tidy 1984, Lewis 1983). This preservation of ethnically plural states, but with political and cultural power usually concentrated in the hands of one group, sparked-off a multitude of nationalist separatist movements that persist also today. However nationalisms, especially of the separatist kind, emerge also when certain ethnic groups, under particular circumstances, become political forces. As it will be seen below, Eritrean nationalism is currently more of a burning issue than Egyptian one and has a different character.

2.2 Ethiopia and Eritrea: culture and nationalism

Eritrea is officially part of the Ethiopian state, although many political groups within it claim independence. In order to understand its contemporary significance, the historical

and cultural relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia must be assessed.

Ethiopia: history and culture

Ethiopia is a multicultural country, with different languages and different religions. However the northern highland area, hereafter referred to as "Abyssinia" (4), has been historically and culturally dominated by groups of semitic-speaking peoples that, from the third century onwards, adhered to Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity. Abyssinia's semitic culture manifests itself not only in the presence of the Falashas, the Ethiopian Jews (5), but also in the languages and physical appearances of Christian Abyssinians (shared by the Falashas) as well as in many ritual aspects and social customs of the Ethiopian branch of Christianity (Ullendorff 1968, 1973). The Falshas practice an ancient form of Judaism, performing only festivals and rituals codified before the Jewish diaspora (cf. Kessler 1985). When in the 4th century AD King Ezana adopted Christianity as the unifying religion for his kingdom in Abyssinia, the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, which established itself as the dominant religious institution during the times of the kingdom of Axum (third-7th century AD) retained many of these practices either through prescription or by tolerating them as tradition. Among these, circumcision on the eighth day after birth, the distinction between pure and impure food (e.g. pork, seafood), ritual slaughter, female ritual purity and others. In terms of festivities, Saturdays were observed as well as Sundays, the religious New Year (Hadesh Amat) was celebrated on the 11th of September and the

Feast of the Cross on the 27th of September, which correspond to Jewish Festivities, while Christmas is on the 6th of January (Ullendorff 1969, 1973) (6). In general the Old Testament is held in equal esteem as the New Testament, and Geez, a semitic language spoken at the time of the kingdom of Axum, is retained up to this date as the liturgical language. From a theological point of view the Ethiopic Orthodox Church adheres to monophysism (i.e. believing in only one nature of Christ), thereby causing a schism from the Catholic Church. It will be seen that Eritreans in Milan, who largely adhere to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, follow to a large extent these rituals and customs, even if they present a different image to the "host society".

Moreover the members of the royal dynasty as well as "commoner" Abyssinians (both Christians and Falashas) believed themselves to be of Israelite descent, through King Solomon's union with the Queen of Sheba, and had Axum as their holy city. All this was retained and consolidated during the Solomonic dynasty (from the 14th century to Haile Selassie's death in 1975), in spite of external pressures from the Muslim world which invaded Abyssinia for a brief period in the 15th century and Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century, who attempted to convert Abyssinians to Catholicism, accusing them of practicing a form of Christianity "contaminated" by Judaism. The southwards expansion from the highlands initiated in the 19th century, brought about the incorporation of many peoples of Cushitic languages, adhering to either Islam or local religions and

looking physically different from the highland Abyssinians. These groups are collectively known as Dromo, or Galla. However Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity remained the most profound expression of the identity of the highland Abyssinians (Ullendorff 1975, pp.93-105), which include about half of the present day Eritrean population. While the historical resistance to encroachment by Islam helps to explain the Ethiopian suspiciousness towards peripheral nationalisms, like the Eritrean one, the resistance of Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity to conversion to Catholicism, is significant to understand the "cultural strategy" of Eritreans in Milan, involving the presentation of a different identity.

In the second millenium AD two related languages developed from Geez, Tigrinya in the northern province of Tigray and in part of present Eritrea (the sites of the Axumite kingdom), and Amharic in the provinces of Gondar, Welo, Gojam and part of Shoa (see Fig. 2.1). The Tigrinya-speaking and Amharic-speaking groups are the carriers of the ancient Abyssinian civilization, speaking semitic languages and adhering to Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity, accounting for around 40% of the population estimated in 1971 at 28 million (ibid., pp.30-31) and at 31 million in 1981 (Hallyday and Molyneux 1981, p.54). It is important to note that part of this "culture area" is in Eritrea, a point which will be developed below. However with the rise of the Solomonic dynasty the centre of power shifted from the northern Tigrinya-speaking area, to the central Amharic-speaking one. An essentially feudal mode of production based on an

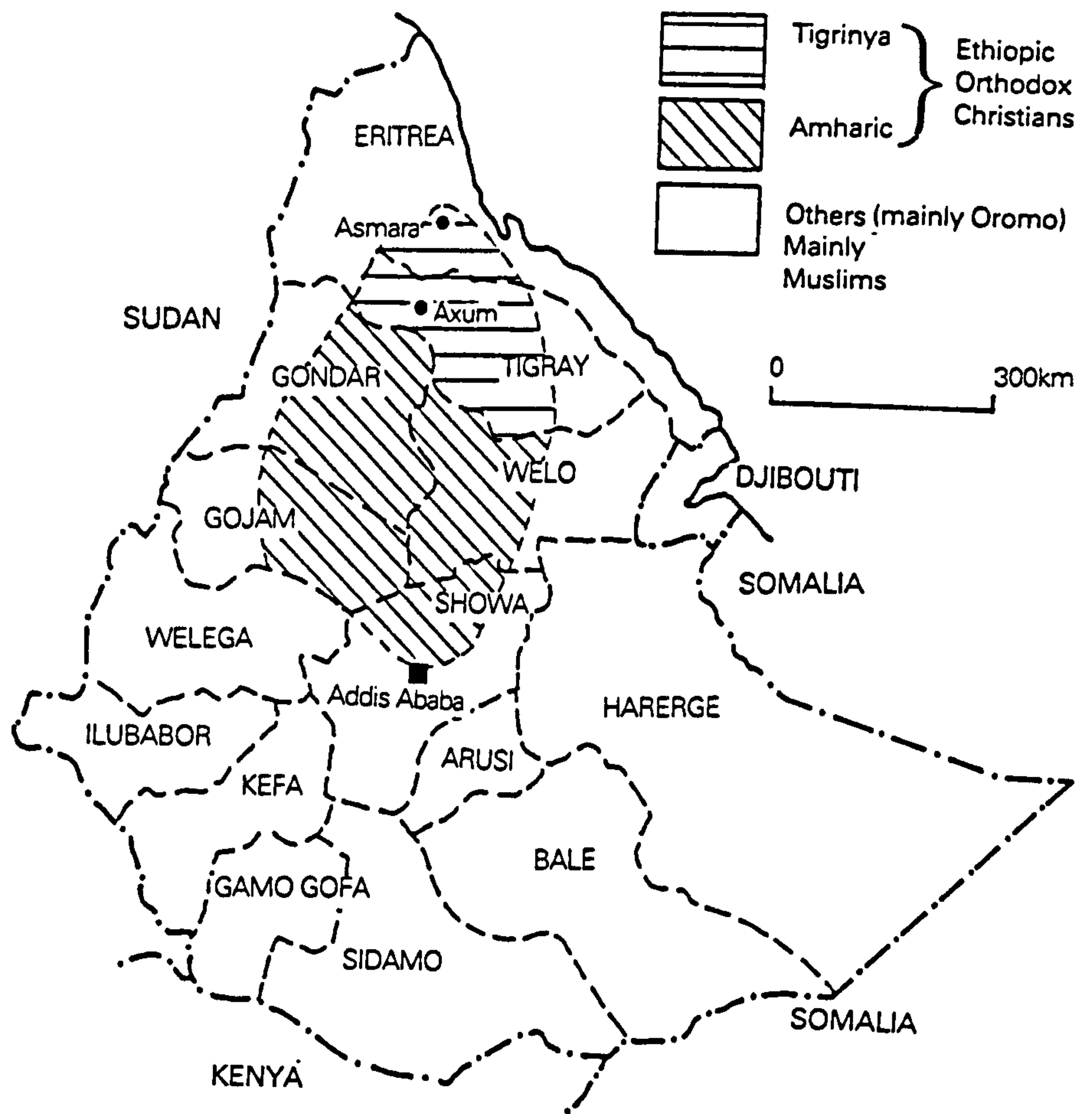


Figure 2.1: Ethiopia: provinces and main etholinguistic areas

inheritable land holding system and feudal dues coincided with a system of ethnic stratification with Amharas and Tigrinyas at the top, often in a position of lord, and Oromos at the bottom, often in a position of serfs (cf. Shack 1974a, Lewis 1983, Triulzi 1983). The emergence and strengthening of the Ethiopian state under Haile Selassie, did not fundamentally change this situation, in spite of attempts at modernization (Halliday and Molyneux 1981). On the contrary the process of "Amharization", whereby Amhara became the official state language and Amharic people held most of the top bureaucratic (and military) positions, reinforced the system of ethnic stratification (cf. Shack 1974b, Bjerren 1985) and gave rise to sentiments of nationalism among the non-Amhara peoples (cf. Lewis 1982, Triulzi 1982, Baxter 1982), including Eritreans.

The period of Italian occupation (1935-41) did not alter this general pattern, with the exception of Eritrea, which was colonized by the Italians for a much longer period. On the contrary, it reinforced sentiments of Amhara pride, since they were the people most engaged in fighting against the Italian invasion waged from the Eritrean colony. On the other hand, with the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1975 by an alliance of a students' movement (EPRP) and the radical military, and the subsequent regime run by a military council (Derg) headed by Colonel Mengistu, transformation of productive relations and political system did occur, enabling some authors to speak of a "revolution" (Halliday and Molyneux 1981, Hiwet 1984). Some elements of Soviet socialism were introduced and Marxism-Leninism became the official

state ideology. However this did not solve the nationalities issues, as the Derg pursued the same centralist position as Haile Selassie's regime, repressing with force the various nationalist movements that arose in this period and the Amharas retained their cultural and political domination (cf. Hallyday and Molyneux 1981, Gilkes 1983). While the specific relationship between Ethiopian "centralism" and Eritrean nationalism will be examined below, that with other non-Eritrean nationalist movements is discussed by Hallyday and Molyneux (1981), Selassie (1980), Baxter (1983), Triulzi (1983). Here it can be pointed out that the Derg feared that any concessions to a particular nationalist (or autonomist) movement could have led to the total fragmentation of the Ethiopian state.

Eritrea

Eritrea is itself a culturally and linguistically diverse region. Data from 1952 report a population of just above one million inhabitants (Pool 1983, p.178), while a publication of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front puts the figure at three and a half million in 1984 (Adulis, vol.1 no. 3, 1984). Eight major linguistic groups can be found, but half of the population is made up by Tigrinya-speaking agriculturalists inhabiting the highland provinces of Akele Guzai, Hamasien (where the provincial capital, Asmara, is located) and Seraye. The vast majority of this population adheres to Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity (see Fig. 2.2), constituting also the greatest part of Eritrean migrants in Milan. The second main linguistic group is that of the Tigre-speakers, which, like Tigrinya, is a semitic language, but whose members are mainly

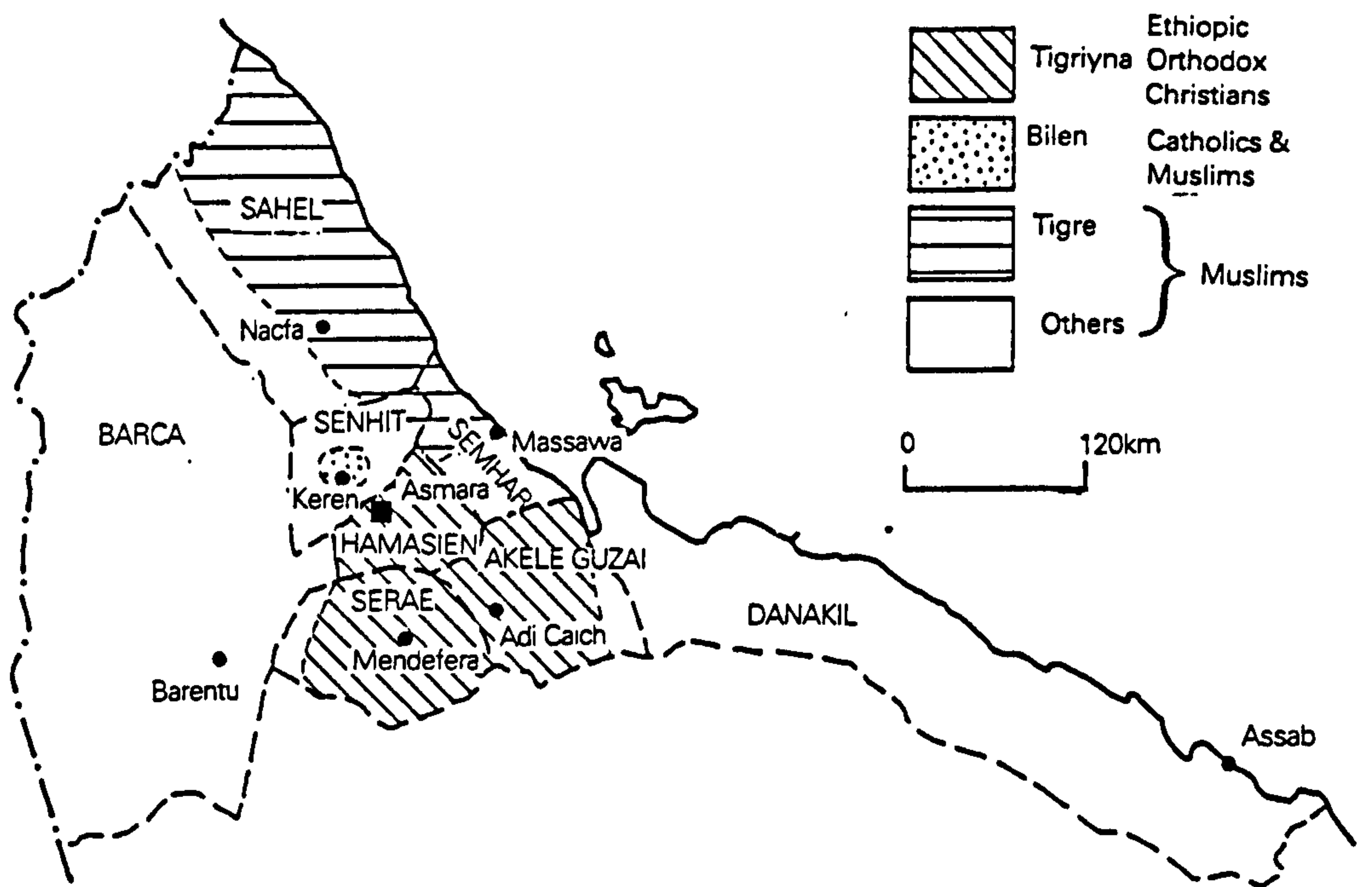


Figure 2.2: Eritrea: districts and main ethnolinguistic areas

Muslims, and semi-nomad pastoralists (except for the inhabitants of Eritrea's main port, Massawa), inhabiting the lowland provinces of Sahel and Barca. The other six linguistic groups are roughly equal in numbers, speak non-semitic languages and are mainly pastoralists and Muslims, except for the Bilen, mainly inhabiting the city of Keren who are equally divided between Muslim and Catholics (cf. Ullendorff 1973, Pool 1983). A few Tigre and Bilen are also to be found in Milan. Eritrea, after the period of Italian colonization (1890-1941), a federation with Ethiopia (1952-1962) and unilateral annexation by Ethiopia in 1962, experienced the growth of strong nationalist movements. The question of why this should be the case may be posed, given that there is almost as much cultural diversity within Eritrea itself as between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and that half of its population, the Tigrinya-speakers, share the same language, religion and other cultural and physical characteristics with the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Tigray (cf. Fig. 2.1) and the same religion, but only related language with the Ethiopian Amharas.

While Eritrea experienced fifty years of Italian colonialism, Ethiopia experienced only five years (Halliday and Molyneux 1981, Pool 1983). In this sense while the Eritrean case is fairly common among African countries where the attempt to create a nation-state usually followed the colonial boundaries (Smith, A.D. 1981, Mazrui and Tidy 1984, Lewis 1983), what is peculiar, as Halliday and Molyneux (1981, p.175) point out, is Ethiopia's secular tradition of independence. Italian colonialism in Eritrea, initiated with

the annexation of the port of Assab in 1879, but formally started only in 1890, created a greater rate of industrialization and proletarianization, at least in the Tigrinya-speaking highlands, than was to be found in the rest of Ethiopia (Halliday and Molyneux 1981, Pool 1983) and gave some degree of common identity and sense of common historical destiny to Eritreans, besides providing the region with the very name "Eritrea" itself. The interlude of British administration (1941-1952) brought about the formation of Eritrean political parties and newspapers which provided media for the expression of the growing nationalist feelings among the intelligentsia. In 1952, following a UN resolution supported by the USA and the western countries in general (which supported Haile Selassie's regime in Ethiopia), Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia. But in 1962 Ethiopia unilaterally annexed Eritrea. Tigrinya, which was Eritrea's most important language, was replaced by Amharic as the only official language. It was at this point that Eritrean nationalist movements gained in strength. Thus a politicized radical and nationalist intelligentsia emerged, to which the leaders of the liberation movement in Milan also belong.

Initially the main movement, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) drew support from the coastal Muslim populations (from which most of its leadership came). It was financed by the Arab countries and the Soviet Union. The establishment of a radical military regime in Addis Ababa, the Derg, did not mean a change of attitude towards the Eritrean question, but only that the Soviet Union and some radical Arab countries swapped sides and supported Ethiopia's "centralism" rather

than Eritrean nationalism. It did mean that the Eritrean urban masses and peasants, radicalized by the revolution but whose expectations of an improvement in Eritrea's autonomy were not met, started supporting more actively the cause of Eritrean nationalism. It is in this period that the major Eritrean liberation movement, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) was formed (7). Although originally the EPLF was formed also because of the need to counter Muslim supremacy in the ELF and therefore had a majority of Christian Tigrinya-speaking members, the main dividing line between the two fronts was their different class character, the ELF drawing support from the semi-nomad pastoralists and the EPLF from the settled peasantry and urban masses (Pool 1983) (8). This may be a significant factor to understand the support the EPLF enjoys in Milan among Eritrean migrants, who mostly come from this background.

Nowadays the most important differences between the two fronts are not so much in class and religious composition (although the ELF has a slight predominance of Muslims while the EPLF of Christian peasants), but in their political character. Both support Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia's "colonialism" and both have a progressive orientation. But the EPLF has a clearer policy and a more radical Marxist-Leninist orientation. While this political persuasion is typical of many Third World liberation movements, it may also be seen as a way to overcome, at the ideological level, the religious division between Christians and Muslims. In fact the EPLF strongly denies being essentially a Christian dominated front. The EPLF is

committed to safeguard the interests of every citizen, regardless of "nationality" and religion (which often coincided). However it is also committed to "punish those who try to sow discord ... and undermine the progress of the Eritrean people on the basis of religion" and that religion should be separated from the state and education (9). This means that religion, and in particular the Christian/Muslim division, is seen as a potentially disruptive element for Eritrean nationalism and that therefore its role is to be played down. This is also because the EPLF fears foreign interference in internal matters, probably from the Arab countries, in spite of the fact that it has enjoyed their support, even if to a lesser extent than the ELF, and that recent Soviet support for the Derg, caused a few radical Arab countries (notably Lybia), to drop their assistance to the Eritrean cause. It is important to assess the EPLF's attitude to religion in order to understand the compromise it had to reach in Milan to establish an agreement with the leader of an Eritrean church.

Eritrean nationalism can thus be characterized at the same time as a "secessionist" and an "irredentist" one. It is secessionist because it wants full independence from Ethiopia, on the basis of the experience of Italian colonialism and of two previous periods in which it was separated from "Abyssinia" and for political reasons. Eritrean nationalism characterizes Ethiopia's control of Eritrea as "colonialist" (cf. Selassie 1980). On the other hand, the Ethiopians point out that the Tigrinya-speaking highlands of Eritrea were part of the Axumite kingdom, the

cradle of Ethiopian civilization (10). As Halliday and Molyneux argue (1981, p.175), "both parties make the conventional nationalist assumption that in previous centuries entities corresponding to either 'Ethiopia' or 'Eritrea' existed". From a political-strategic point of view it is clear that Eritrea provides Ethiopia with a vital outlet to the sea and that the Ethiopian rulers fear that an independent Eritrea would provide the launching pad for Arab penetration in Ethiopia (which has historically been a Christian "island" in a Muslim "sea"), pointing out that all foreign invasions came from that area. However, the EPLF's attitude towards the religious/ethnic question described above, is particularly telling of the "irredentist" side of its nationalism, that is of the need of "nation-building" through cultural unification. Thus the EPLF sees Eritrea's nine "nationalities", as having a common historical and political destiny on the basis of colonialism, which sets them apart from contiguous populations on the other side of the colonial boundary. For example the people of the Ethiopian region of Tigray, physically and culturally indistinguishable from the Tigrinya-speaking Eritrean highlanders, are seen as having only the right to struggle for autonomy, which indeed is the major goal of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), rather than full independence. Therefore Eritrea constitutes a "nation" not by virtue of its cultural/linguistic homogeneity, but through its common history (11). At any rate the Eritrean case for self-determination does have some validity from the point of view of international law (Healy 1983), even if the term itself is rather vague and imprecise (Mayall 1983, Wiberg

1983). This outline helps to understand why not all Eritreans in Milan support the nationalist cause. Yet it will be seen that they, and even some Ethiopians, (especially from Tigray), participate in events supporting the Eritrean cause in Milan.

At a political and ideological level the EPLF carries out massive literacy campaigns among its illiterate members (mainly peasants and women), is committed to a socialist transformation of Eritrean society and seeks international relationships with the non-aligned countries. From the late 1970s up to the present the EPLF has displaced the ELF as the major Eritrean military force fighting the Ethiopian "colonizers". At the moment the EPLF controls large areas of the Sahel and Barca regions and small patches of the central highland provinces. On the other hand the Ethiopians control the main towns of Asmara, Keren and the port of Massawa (where there is a Soviet naval base) and the the main roads connecting Eritrea with Ethiopia. Although in 1980 the EPLF has issued a peace proposal based on a referendum where Eritrean could choose between regional autonomy, federation with Ethiopia or full independence, this has been rejected by the Ethiopian government and thus the fighting goes on. The popular support enjoyed by the EPLF and its guerilla tactics against Ethiopian superiority in terms of manpower and military equipment, create a situation of stalemate and a divided country. In the liberated areas the EPLF is attempting to create a prototype of what an independent Eritrean society would look like, with land redistribution, self-sufficient and small-scale industrial plants (often in

underground cities), sanitary and literacy campaigns and female emancipation. Some of these efforts go on also in Milan and help to explain the support the EPLF enjoys. In the Ethiopian-controlled towns, Amharic is the official language and boys are conscripted into the Ethiopian army often to fight against relatives in the liberation fronts. The droughts and famine that started in the early 1980s have worsened the situation. The EPLF claims that official aid sent to Ethiopian-controlled towns did not reach the liberated areas and accuses the Derg of misusing international aid. Thus after 1975, with the Derg's take-over and the worsening of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the speed of migration greatly increased. Many fled the rural areas to escape the conflict and migrated abroad to avoid conscription in the Ethiopian army, even if not all Eritreans are political refugees in a strict sense. Thousands of people are in refugee camps in Sudan. Among those who managed to escape further afield, most of the Muslim Eritrean migrants went to the Arab countries, while most of the Christian ones went to North America and Europe, including Italy which is often preferred as a destination because of the historical links.

2.3 Egypt and Islam: between modernism and fundamentalism

Islam as world-view

Islam is, together with Judaism and Christianity, one of the three great monotheist religions whose members believe in a transcendent God. It is also one of the world's most diffused religions both in terms of space, running from

Morocco to Indonesia, and of number of believers, amounting to several hundreds of million. Together with Judaism and Christianity its members believe in a history of God's revelation to mankind through a sequence of prophets, held in a body of scriptures. In this respect it considers itself as the final ring in a chain of revelations to prophets, started with Abraham which, through Moses and Jesus, had its last and definitive stage with God's revelation to Muhammed. For Islam, God's final revelation was entrusted to Muhammed who belonged to a particular people, the Arabs, who had the duty to spread his words. In fact the Arabs' mission was to convert to Islam the greatest possible number of people, except for the two previous "people of the Book", i.e. Jews and Christians. Islam's attitude towards conversion is important in order to understand the ideology and practice of the Milanese Muslim Centre and of the Milanese Egyptians on this issue.

For Christianity salvation was essentially achieved through the individual. For Judaism and Islam this was achieved through the collectivity and therefore the relevance of religion for the social order is great (Verbit 1981). Judaism and Islam also have in common the fact that they codify most aspects of social and everyday life in a way that Christianity does not. In Islam this is achieved through the Shari'a, the code of Islamic law, which derives its authority from God's revelation to the Prophet in the Written Law, the Quran, and the Oral Law, the Sunna. Among matters which the Shari'a rules upon are those concerning food prohibition and prescriptions (e.g. ban on pork eating, ritual butchery,

etc.), marriage, divorce and inheritance, trade and commerce. Contrary to Christianity, at least in its Catholic variant, in Islam (and Judaism) the clergy do not claim a monopoly of the relationship between God and the faithful, but is made up only of men of greater religious learning and authority. There are no separate "Churches" as hierarchies of clergy (Gilsenan 1983). However Islam, also because of its wide geographical distribution, should not be seen as a rigid set of bounded structures, but "as a word that identifies varying relations of practice, representation, symbols, concept and worldview within the same and between different societies ... (changing) in important ways over time" (ibid., p. 19). This outline helps to assess the degree to which Egyptians in Milan follow Islam in an orthodox as opposed to a "liberal" way.

The most immediate expression of these differences is the division between Sunni and Shiite Islam. Sunni Islam can be considered the "mainstream" form of Islam, being the most diffused in the Muslim world, not only among virtually all Arab people (except for some of Lebanese and for a minority of Iraqis), but also among the majority of non-Arab Muslims (e.g. Muslim black Africans, Pakistanis and Indonesians). On the other hand Shiite Islam is mostly professed by Iranians. However because, as mentioned above, in Islam there are no "Churches" as corporate bodies with a hierarchy of clergy, Sunnis and Shiites, although divided and often fighting each other, consider themselves both members of the same religion in a way Catholics and most Protestants do not. The main difference between the two lies not so much in questions of

truth, but of power, concerning who is entitled to be the leader of the community (imam) (cf. Pipes 1983). The stronger messianic character of Shiism makes it particularly suited to its members who feel as a body of persons deprived of their rights (Guillaume 1956, p.121) and a "community of the suffering", also because of a historical tradition of resistance to political power (Gilsenan 1983, p.55). Although this makes Shiites more prone to fundamentalism (which will be defined below), this tendency is also present among Sunnis, especially among the Muslim Brotherhood which controls Milan's Muslim Centre. There are other subdivisions in modern Islam besides Sunnis and Shiites. For example within Sunni Islam there are also the Sufis, a mystical and esoteric group also strong in Egypt (Gilsenan 1983, pp.78-87), often considered on the verge of heresy by orthodox Muslims (cf. Guillaume 1956, pp. 143-154). A small group of Sufis is also present in Milan.

It has been noted above that Islam has profound implications for social and political life. Concerning the relationship between Islam and politics, three tendencies can be identified, namely fundamentalism, secularism and modernism (12). The historical and social change of the Muslim world has meant that these three interpretations of the role of Islam in relation to politics have changed over time and in different countries. Fundamentalism acknowledges social changes, but holds that the normative authority of Shari'a can cope with these changes and rule all aspects of social and political life, therefore advocating Islamic theocracy. The best example of a state ruled in this way is, of course,

Iran and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia, within the contemporary Muslim world. However fundamentalism had perhaps its truest expression in various sects, such as the Muslim Brotherhood which will be described below. On the other hand secularism, the opposite of fundamentalism, advocates a separation between religion and politics. Tunisia and Syria are probably the examples more closely approaching this model in the Arab world. Finally modernism holds that the Islamic sources of authority can still influence political life, but within a flexible and "liberal" interpretation of the scriptures, rather than a literal one. This approach has been attempted especially in Egypt but, as it will be seen below, has been countered by fundamentalist revivals, which also hit other Muslim countries (Lakhadar 1981). The distinction between fundamentalist and modernist Islam helps to appreciate the difference in Islamic practice and ideology between Milan's Muslim Centre and the majority of Egyptian migrants.

Capitalism and Islam in Egypt

While Rodinson's study (1977) has shown that Islam, as an ideological system, is not incompatible with capitalism, different positions emerge in the literature concerning the introduction of capitalism and the nature of its development in the Muslim world and in Egypt in particular (cf. Rodinson 1977, Hussein 1977, Clawson 1981). However there is general agreement that after an attempt to industrialize Egypt in the first half of the 19th century, during the period of French and Ottoman domination and, from 1882, of British domination, Egyptian capitalism was heavily conditioned by foreign

(particularly European) capital. However in the 19th century relations of production in the countryside remained of an essentially feudal nature, linked to Egypt's phase of export of raw material (mainly cotton) to Europe, shared by many other Third World countries. In the 20th century up to the 1950s Egyptian industrialization, attempting a phase of "import-substitution", grew slowly also because of European commercial and financial domination and the national bourgeoisie was rather weak. In the countryside the development of capitalist productive systems brought about the creation of masses of landless people who fuelled the urbanization process mainly in the Nile delta (see Fig. 2.3) where most of the industrialization was taking place (Hussein 1977). In 1980 45% of the Egyptian population, estimated at just under 40 million in 1978, was living in urban areas (Gilbert and Gugler 1981, p.7).

The continuation of British domination over Egypt brought about the development of nationalist feelings also among the bourgeoisie. These feelings were channelled through the emergence of the moderate and reformist Wafd party, which, also because of the weakness of the class supporting it, was incapable of getting rid of either the corrupt Farouk monarchy or of British occupation. Two parallel movements, which both had their rank and file mainly made up by members of the Egyptian petty bourgeoisie, emerged: that of the Free Officers, a secret nationalist organization of middle-rank officials, and the Muslim Brotherhood, which will be examined below. It was the former organization led by Nasser which managed to overthrow British domination and the monarchy

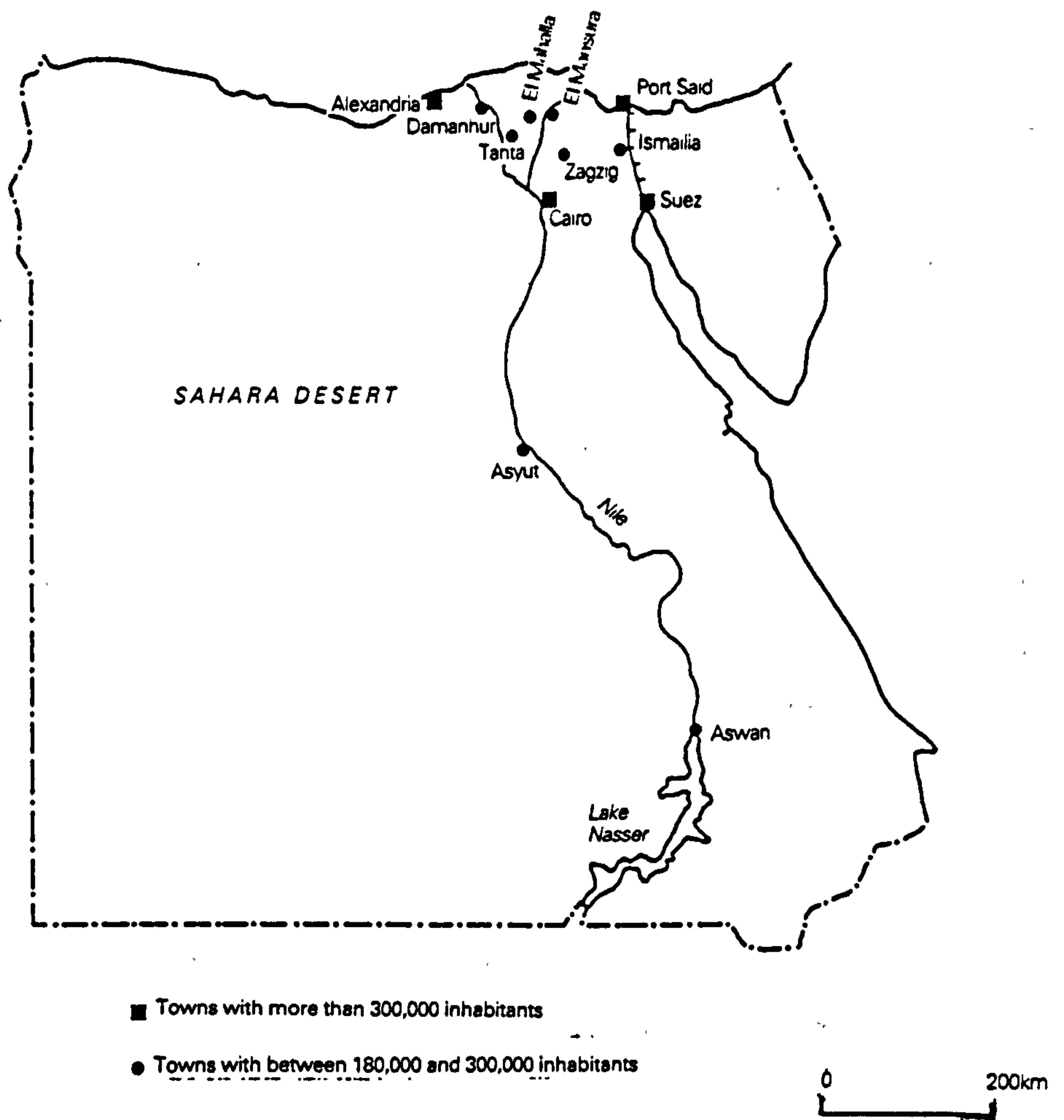


Figure 2.3: Egypt: main towns

thereby realizing Egypt's national aspirations (cf. Mazrui and Tidy 1984, Hussein 1977), even though Egypt also gained the leadership of the pan-Arab nationalist movement (Jankowski 1983).

The period of Nasser's regime (1952-1970) has been characterized as one of state capitalism (Hussein 1977, Clawson 1981) with a strengthening of the state bourgeoisie and an attempt to achieve a self-reliant industrial development. However, due to internal and international problems, this attempt failed and was brought to an end with the 1967 defeat in the Six Days War. The advent of Sadat (1970-1983) brought about a return to economic liberalism and a greater integration of Egypt's economy in the world market. This laid bare the structural imbalances of the Egyptian economy and caused a deterioration of living standards and an impoverishment of the middle and high level of civil servants which joined the impoverished masses (Hussein 1977, pp. xvix-xxi). These include the intellectuals who, as it will be seen, constitute a large part of the migrants who come to Italy.

One of the main problems facing both Nasser and Sadat's regime was the state policy on the role of Islam in the life of civil society. From the times of Muhammed Ali up to the present day, Egypt's rulers have always tried to impose a modernist conception of Islam, i.e. to attempt to conciliate the Shari'a with the requirements of a modern society (Humphreys 1981, Cantori 1981). This uneasy bridge between traditional theology and modernization with the consequent

attempt to control the religious authorities (ulama), brought about the development of a dualism between "official" and "popular" Islam, the former with a modernist approach and the latter with a fundamentalist one. The modernist "official" approach was continued by Nasser, himself a secular figure, who found Islam a good vehicle for the development of his foreign policy and his internal socialist ideology. The modernist use of Islam for purposes of legitimation was continued by Sadat. For example the Shari'a was to constitute only a source of legislation in the 1971 constitution, even if the state's attempt to control the ulama slowed down. Islam was to remain the official religion from which the rulers had to be drawn, although freedom of practice was always assured to Egypt's influential Coptic Christian religious minority. One of the most important attempts to carry out a modernist version of Islam in Egypt concerned the Law on Personal Status, derived from the Sharia'a and affecting issues such as the status of women and marriage. These primarily revolved around the right to polygamy (up to four wives) and the male unilateral right to divorce. However the great fear of the Egyptian rulers of accusations of "irreligiosity" have meant that in the late 1970s only minor reforms were possible (Al-Nowaihi 1983, Hussein, A. 1983). This is important to appreciate the Egyptians' attitude towards marriage in Milan and the extent to which it follows this pattern.

This modernist and liberal approach to the role of Islam in civil society appealed especially to the state bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, to which most Egyptian migrants in

Milan belong. However it met with resistance from the fundamentalist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, which drew their support from the economically vulnerable and ideologically excluded (from "official" Islam) urban petty bourgeoisie and rural poor (Gilsenan 1983). The Brotherhood, founded in 1929, was a fundamentalist movement that sought to overthrow the entire social order, which it considered illegitimate, and to replace it with an Islamic state based on 7th century Arabia and ruled by an orthodox interpretation of the Shari'a. Even though its organizational model was based on the esoteric Muslim sects of the Middle Ages and nostalgically appealed to Islam's Golden Era, it was organized with modern techniques with a paramilitary organization, albeit within the framework of a secret society (Lakhadar 1981). Although it was banned and repressed by Nasser, the 1967 military defeat by Israel (which also meant an ideological defeat), the socioeconomic failure of Nasser's statist attempt and the return to legality with Sadat brought about mass popular support, not only in Egypt, but also in other Arab countries, like Syria and Jordan. Despite all this the Brotherhood is still a minority movement in Egypt. But the majority of the Egyptians who migrate to Milan come from an educated urban background and subscribe more to the official modernist version of Islam than to the Brotherhood's fundamentalism. However the Brotherhood is also present in Milan.

2.4 Conclusion

The two groups under consideration have relatively different backgrounds and origins, in spite of a few similarities. Both Eritrea and Egypt experienced a growing rate of urbanization in the 20th century, albeit greater in the latter case than in the former, and most of the migrants to Milan came from an urban background. Both regions experienced colonialism and the development of nationalism in the 20th century, although nationalism is not as much a live issue as far as Egypt is concerned (except, at an Arab level, for the Palestinian question). By contrast it is still a very "hot" issue in Eritrea. After Italian colonisation and largely as a result of it, the target of this nationalism became Ethiopia in spite of the fact that half of the Eritrean population shared the same religion and a similar language (identical to that of the Ethiopian region of Tigray) with the "official" Ethiopian ones and that much cultural diversity was to be found in Eritrea itself. However most of the migrants to Milan shared their allegiance to the cause of Eritrea's independence (via the radical Eritrean liberation movements, particularly the EPLF) and to Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity (a form of Christianity with many Judaic elements and rather different from Catholicism). They spoke Tigrinya, the semitic language of the highlanders (by far the most diffused language in Eritrea). The conflict that the national question entailed was one of the main causes of emigration. On the other hand, the main cause of Egyptian emigration seems to be the profound processes of social transformation and differentiation it has experienced in this century and the

recent impoverishment of the middle classes and of the intelligentsia, who provided most of the migrants. Although Egypt has recently experienced an Islamic fundamentalist revival, most of the immigrants' background is still that of a modernist and liberal interpretation of Islam which, as a religion, has profound implications for both social and political life. It will be seen in later chapters to what extent this applies also to the Milanese situation.

Having analyzed the background to emigration, the next chapter will examine the context of immigration in Italy.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

(1) See, for example, Evans-Fritchard and Fortes (1940) and Radcliffe-Brown (1950) traditional anthropological approaches to segmentary societies. These approaches, stemming from a structural-functionalist perspective, have been criticized by marxist anthropologists on the grounds that they did not recognize the existence of exploitation in apparently egalitarian societies (cf. the articles contained in Seddon 1978 and Terray 1972). Leach (1961) criticized the tautologous implications of the structural-functionalist comparative method. Finally, Orientalism has also been criticized as an ideological notion conceiving the "Orient" as a static entity (cf. Said 1985).

(2) According to World Bank data cited in Gilbert and Gugler (1981). O'Connor (1983) lowers the figure for Ethiopia to 8%.

(3) Cf. Pool (1982, p.176) and Firebrace and Holland (1984) who quote the same figure as applying already to the 1940s.

(4) A term used for many centuries to denote this area.

(5) Who call themselves Beta Israel. Cf. Kessler (1985) on this topic.

(6) The Ethiopic Orthodox calendar, however, is solar rather than lunar like the Jewish and Muslim ones and is based on the Julian, rather than Gregorian compilation (followed by "western" Christians). Cf. Ullendorff (1973)

(7) This characterization has been recently challenged by Gebre-Medhin (1984).

(8) Besides the EPLF and the ELF there are also other Eritrean liberation movements, such as Osman Sale Sabbe's Eritrean Liberation Front-Popular Liberation Forces. But because of their limited influence, the discussion is confined to the ELF and mainly to the EPLF.

(9) These points are taken from the EPLF's "National Democratic Programme" of 1977, contained in Holland and Firebrace (1984), who also provide a scheme of the EPLF's organizational structure (p.42).

(10) As in a pamphlet issued by the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (controlled by the Derg) in August 1985 called "The Sole Truth and Only Solution".

(11) These views are expressed in a pamphlet issued by the EPLF called: "The EPLF and its Relations with Other Democratic Movements within Ethiopia".

(12) This distinction and most of the following discussion is taken from Humphreys (1981).

CHAPTER 3: THE "HOST SOCIETY" AND THE CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION

This chapter analyzes the "context" of immigration of Eritreans and Egyptians at the Italian and Milanese levels. The "context" will affect the migrants in two major ways. In the first place, from a socio-economic point of view, it will be important to assess the relationship between the migrants and the class structure of the "host society". This has important effects not only on the economic niches available to the migrants, but also on whether they can make use of class resources (e.g. unionization, strikes, social and job security, property) for their social advancement and on the pattern of conflict with the "host society". The first two sections of the chapter contain an analysis of political institutions, social classes, socio-territorial structures and patterns of urbanization. The third section provides a brief overview of the "new immigration" at the Italian level and an analysis of the regulations about foreign immigration and the effect on the ethnic division of labour. Finally there is a brief section on Milan's political history and institutions. The "context" of immigration can also be defined in terms of the main cultural discourses of the "host society", i.e. hegemonic political discourses which affect the patterns of alliance the migrants are able to establish with sections of the "host society" and the ideological legacy of racist stereotypes, whose effects will be analyzed in chapter 8.

3.1 Italy from Unity to the post World War II period: history and politics

Although Italy is nowadays among the most industrialized countries of the capitalist world, it has usually been considered an "untypical" example of a capitalist country. In order to analyze its peculiarity and the context to which Eritreans and Egyptians migrated, it is useful to start from the period immediately following the unification of the country. This history will also show some continuities in terms of political features that persist up to the present and affect the patterns of alliance and system of resources open to the migrants in Milan.

From Unity to the fall of fascism

In 1861 the foundation of the unitary Italian state brought together the North and the South which had very different social characteristics, due, among other things, to the different kinds of foreign domination they experienced. The North, from the end of the 18th century, had undergone the gradual introduction of liberal ideas and of a capitalist mode of production, both in agriculture and in industry, although it was rather weak due to foreign competition. Also the northern industrial bourgeoisie, although politically and culturally hegemonic, was still a rather weak social class. The South, on the other hand, in spite of the existence of small liberal groups, remained an essentially feudal society and the process of unification met with popular uprisings known as "banditism", where not only landlords and peasants, but also the clergy and other sections of society reacted to

the encroachment by the northern state, which threatened to bring about a collapse of the existing social order (Tullio-Altan 1986). Although a comprehensive account is impossible in this context, it can be pointed out that the modern mafia also has its origins in this context.

The need to find a market for goods produced by northern industries and hence some degree of protectionism (because of competition from economically more advanced countries), brought about the establishment of a class alliance ("historical bloc") between the northern bourgeoisie and the southern landed class, which obtained the maintenance of the status quo in exchange of protectionism, in Gramsci's classical formulation (1974). In Gramsci's view this was also achieved through an ideological "hegemony" of this "historical bloc" through what he called "organic intellectuals" (including teachers, clergy, officials) over the subordinate "bloc" made up by the northern proletariat and the southern peasants, which did not manage to counter this hegemony (cf. Gramsci 1977). Thus capitalism and the bourgeoisie did not achieve a complete hegemony in Italy in the period from Unity to the advent of fascism, which was reflected at the political level by the elaborate system of negotiations known as trasformismo which the liberal state had to go through to pass any legislation (Tullio-Altan 1986).

The First World War brought this state of affairs to an end. The contradiction between an economy strained by the war effort, a weak bourgeoisie and liberal state on the one hand

and a radical but not yet very strong proletariat, contributed to the advent of fascism in 1922 (Sassoon 1985). The rise of fascism or of fascist-like regimes in Europe in the 20th century, has been characterized as a "revolution from above" (1), attempting to modernize the economy through a strong interventionist policy by the state, in a situation of weak capitalism in countries that had not experienced earlier bourgeois revolutions like England or France (Barrington Moore 1967). From a similar perspective, but taking into account also Wallerstein's (1979) framework, it has been noted that all the "semi-peripheral" southern European countries, experienced some form of fascist-like dictatorship in this century (Giner 1982). The important thing is to stress that, at least as far as Italy is concerned, although the fall of fascism and the advent of a democratic system after 1945 brought about major political changes at the political level, there are also some continuities at the socioeconomic level. These concern especially the role of state intervention in civil society which remained great in the democratic period, also through institutions for economic control like huge state holdings, which had already been created in the fascist period. Among the most important effects of this continuity were the growth of the state bureaucracy and the great role that the political parties assumed in controlling this sector on clientelistic bases (Tullio-Altan 1986). This legacy continues up to the present and has profound effects on the relationship between the migrants groups in consideration and the Italian state and society.

The post-World War II institutional and political framework

Because of this role of the state in Italian civil society, a brief analysis of the institutional and political framework is needed. Italy is a democratic republic (after a referendum in 1946 which abolished the monarchy), whose politico-legal system works within the limits of the Constitution. The Italian Constitution prescribes free democratic elections, based on a system of proportional representation, to elect the members of parliament who hold the legislative power. It also guarantees the equality of every citizen before the law, regardless of sex, race, language, religion or political opinion and safeguards the right to private property, albeit in a limited way. These can be seen as the liberal aspects of the Constitution. However, forms of collective property and state ownership are also envisaged and the working class is given a special recognition as a fundamental social force of Italian society. These aspects constitute the socialist component of the constitution and although there are certain continuities with fascism, as noted above, they also break with one of the main fascist socioeconomic practices, that of corporatism. Finally, although freedom of religion is guaranteed, a special role is granted to the Catholic Church. The Constitution thus embodies a political compromise among Italy's major political forces: the numerically small, but politically and culturally influential liberal section (made up by the Liberal and Republican parties), the socialist bloc (made up by the Communist and Socialist parties) and the Catholic one (made up essentially by the Christian Democratic party) (Sasson 1985).

As is widely recognized, in Italy political parties have a major role in controlling civil society for a variety of reasons, some of which are mentioned above. The Christian Democratic party (DC) has been the politically most influential party since the Second World War. It has participated in every government coalition (with one of its men as Prime Minister) (2) since the war and has enjoyed between 39% and 33% of the votes in the last ten years. It is difficult to characterize the DC both in terms of its political line and of its social base. Just as its policies are multifaceted so is its social base. On the one hand it is committed to private enterprise, on the other hand it has to maintain social peace and legitimacy acknowledging some form of state intervention (ibid. p.225). Moreover it realized that with involvement in the socioeconomic system it could also increase its power in a clientelistic way, especially by extending the public sector (ibid. and Tullio-Altan 1986). Although its traditional power base was constituted by the agrarian classes and petty bourgeoisie, especially in the South, and by part of the northern bourgeoisie, it also had the support of some sections of the working class, but one of its main strongholds is the public tertiary sector. From an ideological point of view, although it is committed to liberal capitalism and to safeguarding Catholic values, it also includes some progressive labour factions and supports one trade union, the Confederazione Italiana dei Sindacati dei Lavoratori (CISL). Finally the DC is made up of several factions, supporting different clientelistic interests, often in conflict with each other (cf. Zuckerman 1977).

The second main party is the Communist one (PCI), which in the past ten years has enjoyed between 27% and 34% of the votes. Although it is committed to a socialist transformation of society, it has shown that it is willing to accept some degree of private enterprise, although its line is not totally clear in terms of policies (Tullio-Altan 1986). Politically it has proved to be committed to the principles of democracy and pluralism and has been the Communist Party that has shown the highest degree of independence from Moscow in the west. In spite of its large following, especially among the working class but also among intellectuals, service workers and some sections of the bourgeoisie (especially in some centre-north regions), it has never formally achieved central power because it has not found political partners willing to make a coalition. However, its power in the labour movement (it supports the largest trade union, the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, CGIL), in the world of culture and education and in many local governments, is considerable.

The Socialist Party (PSI) has averaged around 10% of the vote in the last ten years. Formerly an ally of the PCI, the PSI soon moved to the centre in an attempt to become a "centrist" reformist party, hoping to draw support from the progressive bourgeoisie. It had however to compete not only with the two powerful adversaries mentioned above, but also with the small centre parties (among which the most prominent is the Republican Party, PRI) which all, from different angles, claimed to advocate some degree of reformism. The fact that, because of proportional representation, any coalition needs

its votes to form a majority, has ensured it a permanent presence in every government in the past twenty years. It supports one trade union, the Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL). The three trade unions, CGIL, CISL and UIL formed a confederation in the late 1960s that continues up to the present, in spite of some recent divisions. It is a major social and political force in Italian society, to a certain extent controlled by the political parties, but also with some degree of independence, especially the Christian Democrat CISL.

The political parties vary considerably in the strength of their support, according to different regions. This makes it particularly important to provide a brief analysis of the regional system of local government. There are three local levels at which power is delegated. The smallest is that of the municipality which can range from towns with over a million inhabitants to villages of a few thousand. Next is the province, which includes the various municipalities surrounding the major urban centres (95 in total). Finally, there is the region (20 in total). These levels of local authority have functions concerning planning, the provision of social services, local public administration and some degree of legislative power. The extent of these functions, especially those concerning planning and services (including for example the management of public health and, to a certain extent, housing) has meant an involvement of the parties in civil society even greater than that of the central state and a strengthening of the party-based clientelistic system (cf. Sassoon 1985, pp.210-220). Overall, the municipalities and

the regions have carried more power than the provinces. However, local authorities in Italy have only a limited financial autonomy from the central state with which they are often in conflict (cf. Martinotti 1981). The uneven distribution of wealth and political support within the regional system will be discussed below. This brief analysis of the role of the Italian central and local state and of the political parties was needed in order to have some background on the relationship between the migrant groups under consideration and the Italian state (central and local) and on the patterns of political alliances with the main political groups, like the parties and trade unions.

3.2 Social classes, socioterritorial structures, urbanization and migration

This section will show how changes in Italy's socioeconomic structure explain how Italy changed from being a country of net labour out-migration, from the end of the 19th century (because of processes outlined in the previous section), to being a net importer of foreign labour.

Social classes

The development of Italian capitalism has presented Italian sociologists, mainly working within a marxist perspective, with two related sets of problems. In the first place, Italy has experienced a period of economic growth since the war (especially in the 1958-63 period, termed "economic miracle") that aligned her with the most industrialized countries in the world (among the top five in 1986), in spite of a long

phase of stagnation (especially during the 1970s). However, Italian capitalism has always looked somehow "distorted" and uneven. The problem has been to characterize the specificity of Italian capitalism. The second set of problems concerned the growth of the tertiary sector, especially in public administration, to some extent common to other western societies, but also with some Italian peculiarities, especially with regard to its dimension. Starting with the second set of problems, analyses conducted in the early 1970s (Sylos-Labini 1978, Pizzorno 1978) confirmed the great numerical importance of the "middle ranks", especially including public employees. The growth of this class was linked to the surplus of labour, especially in the South (even after an extensive emigration), and characterized as a "political exchange" whereby state intervention would have provided employment in the public bureaucracy in exchange for social consensus. The involvement of the state in creating employment and the system of subsidies, known as assistenzialismo, often following clientelistic rules, are very important points in understanding the Italian class structure (3).

As far as the proletariat is concerned, this class experienced rapid growth especially from the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s (the phase of the "economic miracle"), the highest in western Europe. But since the 1970s, after the phase of economic recession, it shrank considerably partly because of the introduction of labour-saving technologies, partly replaced by an increase in employment in the service sector. The dynamics of employment are usually explained

within a segmented labour market approach (4), with the creation of a numerically smaller "central" or "protected" working class and a "marginal" or "unprotected" proletariat, working in small-scale enterprises with a flexible system of labour, an important point that will be expanded below. The bourgeoisie has on the whole increased its numbers in the past thirty years (5). The combined effects of the growth of employment in the public sector, assistenzialismo and the rising expectations of Italian youth after the spread of compulsory education, have meant that in recent times there has been a gap in labour supply in the "unprotected" and least attractive occupations in the tertiary sector which could not be reached by technological innovation (e.g. cleaning, catering). This applied especially to urban centres, which have been filled, at least in part, by the Third World immigrants (cf. Mingione 1983a, b). As to the first question posed at the beginning of this section concerning the specificity of Italian capitalist development, it is closely related to the socioterritorial structure which will now be examined.

Socioterritorial and social structures

The particular character of Italian capitalism has often been analyzed in evolutionary terms with notions of "backwardness" and "latecoming" and more recently in terms of historical and social specificity within the constraints of the international division of labour (cf. Donolo 1978, Triglia 1978), usually related to the regional question. Traditionally the regional question has been analyzed in a dualistic way, contrasting the industrialized and "developed"

North, with the rural and "underdeveloped" South. However a more recent analysis (Bagnasco 1977) has proposed a new socioterritorial articulation of Italian society. This is based on the significance of small-scale, decentralized industrial units and enterprise, termed "diffused", "marginal", "peripheral" or "informal" economy. The main characteristics of this economy are the following: a) the small-scale size of its units; b) the use of cheap and flexible labour, often of a family kind and interlinked with agriculture; c) the decentralization of semi-autonomous productive units, often linked by networks; d) frequent tax evasion and therefore statistical invisibility (ibid., Paci 1982). This sector has provided a great proportion of Italy's GNP, exports and employment particularly in times of economic recession and usually consists of "traditional" manufactured goods such as clothing, shoes, and furniture (Bagnasco 1977).

This sector is concentrated in the central and northeastern regions and has therefore been termed the "third Italy" (or "Peripheral" Italy), besides the North-West (or "Central"), characterized by large-scale industry, "advanced" tertiary sector and relatively strong "central" working class and bourgeoisie, and the South (or "Marginal" Italy), characterized by unemployment and underemployment, state subsidies (assistenzialismo), industrial relocation of state monopolies (the so-called "cathedrals in the desert") and precarious economic activities (see Fig. 3.1). Another peculiarity of the "third Italy" is the fact that it has either a very clear Communist majority (in the central regions around Bologna and Florence) or a Christian Democrat

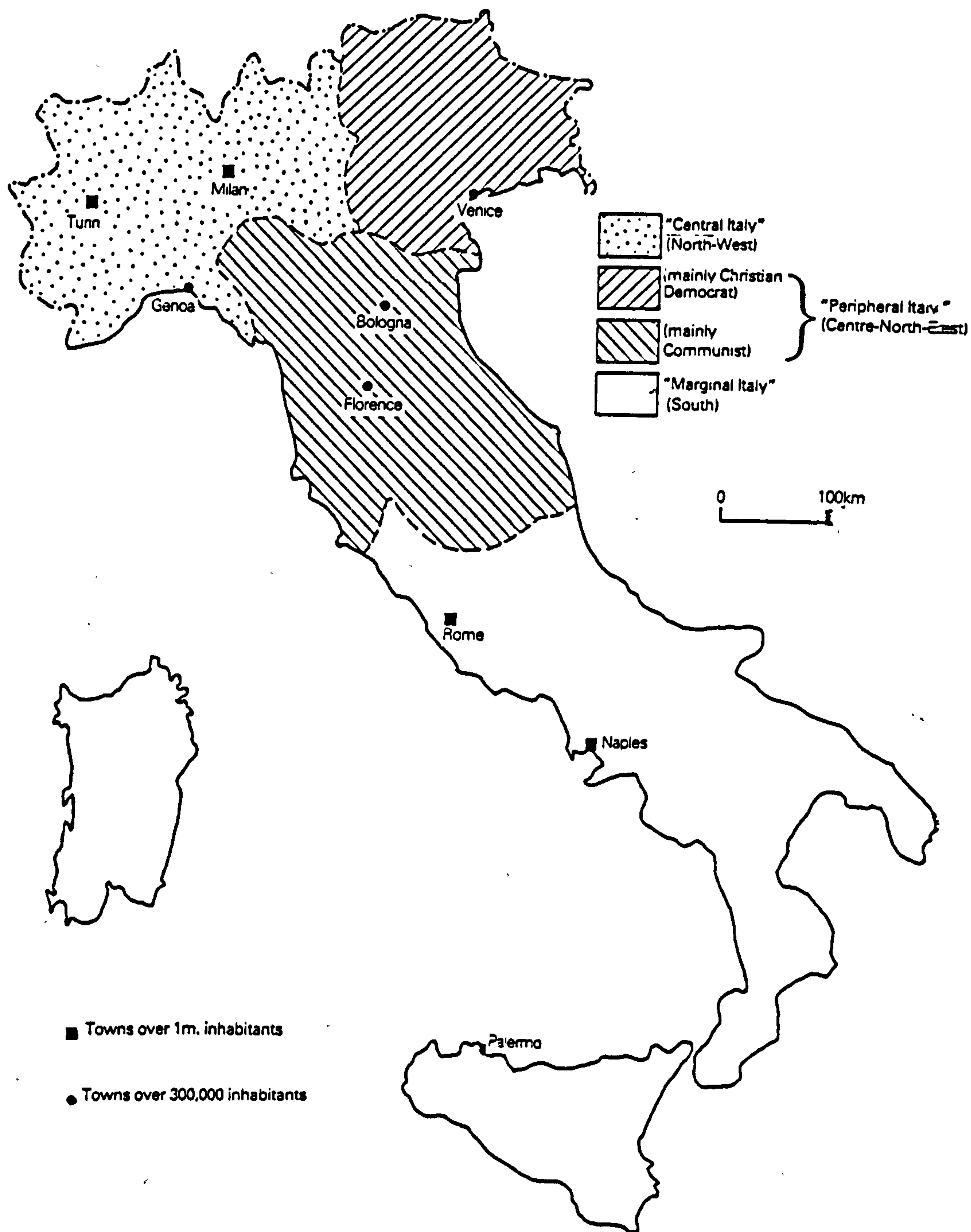


Figure 3.1: The "Three Italies" (after Bagnasco, 1977)

one (in the northeastern regions around Venice). The fact that the PCI has the greatest number of votes in regions without a large-scale proletariat working in big factories also calls for a revision of the classical marxist assumptions about the relationship between economic life and political consciousness. In the North-West and in the South there is a pattern resembling more closely the national average; however with a relatively greater strength of the PCI in the North-West and DC in the South (cf. Sassoon 1985 p.173). The greater strength of the PCI in the Centre and DC in the North-East has been analyzed in terms of different political traditions and similar social role performed by the parties at the level of their grass-root organizations (cf. Bagnasco 1977, Kertzer 1979). It has to be said, however, that the PCI is also very strong in the big industrial centres such as Milan and Turin.

From an a-spatial point of view, the Italian social structure has been characterized with a four-fold typology, taking into account the segmented labour market approach: a) a "protected" productive sector (large-scale industry, especially in the North-West); b) a "protected" reproductive sector (public administration, especially in Rome, the capital, and large-scale enterprise white collar workers in the North-West); c) a "non-protected" productive sector (small-scale enterprises in the Centre-North-East); d) a "non-protected", but "assisted" reproductive sector (assistentzialismo, precarious economic activities). The regional locations of these sectors are of course not completely clear-cut. Each one of them is present also in

other regions, even if to a lesser extent and have been added here to the original formulation (Paci 1982). Finally the impact of the welfare state and the subsequent "fiscal crisis" on the household economy in terms of changing time-budgets and sexual division of labour and the different "strategies" of families to cope with these new situations have also been analyzed (cf. Mingione 1983a, 1983b). Part of these strategies involved the employment of foreign domestic labour as there was a growth in the employment rate of women who, also because of the crisis of the welfare state, needed domestic assistance. As will be seen in the next section, these socioterritorial structures have some impact on the character of foreign migration to Italy.

Urbanization and migration

Before the First World War Italy had a relatively low degree of urbanization and the largest city was Naples, the ex-capital of the Borbonic kingdom. The rate of urbanization increased in the fascist period, especially with the growth of Rome, the political and bureaucratic capital, and at a faster rate after the Second World War. In particular in the period from 1951 to 1971, industrial development in the North-West largely coincided with a great urbanization process especially in the three large centres of the so-called "industrial triangle": Milan, Turin and Genoa, the first in 1971 with around 1.7 million, the second with around 1.2 million and the third with around 800,000 inhabitants (Mingione 1981, p.119). While Turin was mainly characterized by the presence of a single huge factory, Fiat, and Genoa by state-owned petrochemical plants and the port,

Milan had a relatively diversified industrial structure and is Italy's leading industrial, financial and commercial centre (cf. Bagnasco 1977, p. 232, Dalmaso 1971). The Centre-North-East does not have any urban centre with more than one million inhabitants and in general the urban structure is balanced and integrated with the "diffused economy" described above and rural activities. Finally the South's main urban centres are Rome, with economic activities mainly concentrated in the public bureaucracy, and Naples, with some degree of industrial relocation and a large amount of casual labour and unemployment. There are no other urban centres with more than one million inhabitants in the South. In general they are disconnected from the wider socioeconomic context (cf. Mingione 1981, pp. 81-124). Although the North-West has the highest number of large towns, the overall level of urbanization is fairly uniform across the country (around 52%), with the exception of two southern regions.

Industrial development in the North-West brought about, from the 1950s to the late 1960s, a massive migratory movement from the South, where there was a large surplus of population especially in the rural sector. This movement was largely directed to the three cities of the "industrial triangle" and followed two earlier stages of Italian migration (mainly from the South): a) a permanent transoceanic one (largely to the Americas) at the beginning of the century; b) a temporary one to northern Europe (especially to France and Belgium in the 1940s and 1950s and Germany in the 1950s and 1960s) (cf. Reyneri 1979, Ascoli 1979) (6). Migration to the northern Italian cities was essentially a permanent one, even if often

in two stages, and while the construction industry often proved to be a "beach-head" for these immigrants, it was the industrial manufacturing sector, which had a labour shortage, that provided the greatest amount of employment for them, coinciding with the period of the "economic miracle". To give an idea of the dimension of this internal migration, it can be mentioned that between 1958 and 1963 as many as 900,000 people came to the North from the South with a peak of 240,000 in 1961 (Ascoli 1979). These migrants encountered difficulties in finding housing and sometimes even in communicating since most of them spoke the southern dialects and many were illiterate. Their jobs were sometimes precarious since, although they were Italian citizens, they were often required to have a residence permit in the city where they were living, which in turn was linked to the job contract. They were therefore at the mercy of their employer who could threaten to send them away. In this respect this migration had some structural affinities with the "new" Third World one. However, in this case, greater cultural similarities and common citizenship meant that the migrants largely integrated in the "autochthonous" working class with whom they shared the struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s which greatly increased their income and their social and trade union rights. After this period the southern migrants largely became part of the "central" unionized working class (Ascoli 1979, Reyneri 1979), in contrast to what happened to foreign immigrants.

The economic recession of the 1970s and the subsequent phase of industrial restructuring with the introduction of

labour-saving technologies brought this process of migration to an end. In this period also the migratory balance of Italy as a whole with respect to foreign countries started to become positive (i.e. with more immigrants than emigrants). The introduction of technological innovation, however, did not reach certain sectors of society, especially in the least qualified occupations of the service sector in which a labour shortage persisted (cf. Reyneri 1979, Mingione 1983a, 1983b), also because of the raised expectations of the native labour force through unionization and compulsory education. This shortage, especially concentrated in the large towns, was to be filled, at least in part, by the "new" immigration. Thus while in the first stage (end of 19th century-1950s) Italian capitalist development was constrained by a surplus of population (mainly in the South) which was forced to emigrate, and in the second stage (1950s-1960s) by a shortage of labour in the North, filled by migrants from the South, in the third stage (1970s-present) for the first time it was affected by a shortage of labour largely filled by foreign migration. Foreign migrants have provided many European countries (e.g. France, Germany, Britain, with cheap and flexible labour, "filling" those employment sectors abandoned by indigenous workers (cf. Piore 1979, Castles and Kosack 1973, Miles, 1982). This applies also to Italy since the late 1970s. But whereas migration to the above countries was, at least at the beginning, predominantly concentrated in the industrial sector, in Italy, because of its peculiar capitalist development, this occurred in the service sector.

3.3 The "new" immigration and ethnic division of labour

Dimensions and location of the "new" immigration

It was only in the late 1970s that the presence of a "new" immigration, largely from the "Third World", started to be noticed by scholars of migration (Reyneri 1979, Ascoli 1979). Estimates of the presence of foreign immigrants in Italy, especially from Third World countries, have always been difficult because of the high rate of "illegal" and therefore undocumented immigrants. Indeed their "illegality" constitutes one of the main features of this process. As mentioned in the first chapter, "illegality" is a very powerful instrument on the part of the "host society" in ensuring the presence of a cheap and "flexible" pool of labour in those sectors where there is labour shortage. This is achieved by the instrument of the sojourn permit which is tied to the existence of a job contract, which gives the employer the bargaining power of threatening to get the migrants deported if they do not comply with the terms of labour (Reyneri 1979, Portes, 1977, Giner and Salcedo 1978). In this way migrants fill the "unprotected" sectors of the segmented labour market. In Italy the "new" Third World immigration, estimated at between 500,000 and 800,000 individuals (Melotti et al. 1985, p. 14), has largely followed this pattern, whether directed to the main urban centres of the North-West or Rome, where the greatest number is reported to be, or in the small-scale foundries of the region around Bologna, in the Centre-North-East, where Egyptians are reported to work, or in the South in the fishing-boats of Sicily, where Tunisians are reported to work.

(Ascoli 1979, p.7). The "new" immigration has therefore to a certain extent been shaped by the "Three Italies" framework described above.

Regulations concerning foreign immigration

An analysis of the legislation concerning foreign immigration is therefore crucial to understand some of the structural features affecting not only Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan, but other migrants groups in other parts of Italy as well. The regulations concerning foreign immigration, at least up to 1986, were not based on an organic law, but on a series of government circulars and police regulations (7), some of which date from the fascist period, like two police regulations of 1926 and 1931, slightly updated by new circulars in 1963 and 1979 (8).

In order to sojourn legally in Italy, a "sojourn permit" is needed, as the police might require it at any time. This can be granted mainly for three reasons: a) tourism; b) study; c) work. It is valid only for the purpose for which it has been issued and follows the issue of the visa (for one of three purposes) stamped in the migrant's passport at the Italian embassy in the visitor's country of origin. Tourism may be mentioned only insofar as it is used by migrant workers to enter Italy and pursue some unauthorized occupations and therefore reside illegally. In this respect it should be noted that it is relatively easy to enter Italy with a tourist permit: it is more or less sufficient to have a valid passport. The permit is valid for three months and it is not renewable. On the other hand to get a permit for study

reasons is more complicated. In order to do so students are required to produce evidence of having adequate income so as to have sufficient means of subsistence during the period of study and evidence of having attended previous courses with proficiency. They must also undergo an examination in the Italian language. Students are not allowed to work. Sometimes migrants register for a course in order to obtain a sojourn permit and thereafter work illegally.

As far as workers are concerned, the analysis will not concern workers coming from EEC countries or from the OCED, with whom there are bilateral agreements, or workers with particular occupations, such as show-business or multinational employees for whom there are special regulations. For other foreign workers the following procedure must be followed. The first step is to get an "authorization to work". This is done by the prospective employer who presents an application to the Province's Labour Office to employ a foreign worker for a specific occupation. After a period in which the Labour Office makes sure that no Italian or EEC worker is interested in the job, it grants the authorization to work (work permit) and the employer sends it to the worker. Thereafter the worker can obtain a visa to enter Italy for "working purposes" from the Italian embassy. On his/her arrival the foreign worker (obviously with a valid document) must within three days go to the Questura (local police headquarters) with the work permit and is thereafter granted a sojourn permit "for working" purposes, which is valid for one year. If the working contract is renewed, or

the worker finds a new employer, within the same occupation, a new work and sojourn permit may be issued.

On the other hand, if the worker seeks a new contract within a new occupation, he/she would have to undergo the same procedure again from the country of origin. If the work contract is broken by either side, this means the automatic expiry of the sojourn permit. The worker would then have to leave the country. This has profound implications for the relationship between the worker and the employer which will be discussed below. Domestic workers are also required to be able to produce a return ticket to the country of origin which would have to be paid by the employer. On the other hand, domestic workers have the advantage that the employer can more easily require a specific worker and that there are specialized agencies that can do most of the bureaucratic work for them. On this general pattern there is the exception of children of less than eighteen years of age who are allowed to join their parents, if legally residing, with a special permit "for family reunion". Finally, while Italy has signed the Geneva Convention of 1951 on political refugees, it added a clause defining refugees as "all those who, as a result of events happening before 1/1/1951 ... find themselves out of the country of which they are citizens and cannot or do not want the benefit from the protection of that country..." (9). According to this clause, Italy in practice recognizes as political refugees mainly people coming from Eastern Europe, except for some Vietnamese and Chileans who were granted the status with ad hoc circular letters. Therefore Eritreans, who might have grounds on which to be

recognized as political refugees in other countries that have signed the Geneva Convention, have to enter Italy according to the procedures set out above.

It is clear from the above outline that the rules concerning foreign immigration are complicated, discriminatory and difficult to follow. This is worsened by the fact that the police authorities from whom the migrants would have to receive their sojourn permit are able to exert great discretionary power. Adding to this the chronic slowness and deficiencies of the Italian bureaucratic machinery, one comes to the conclusion that a great deal of the migrants simply do not follow these rules and therefore reside and work in Italy "illegally" and undocumented. By far the most common way is to enter Italy with a tourism visa and thereafter continue the sojourn illegally. It is therefore almost impossible to give an accurate estimate of the number of foreign migrants in Italy, especially from the Third World. Secondly, as hypothesized above, these systems of regulations push the migrant workers into the area of "illegality" where, as "clandestine" workers, they provide a cheap and "flexible" pool of labour. It has been argued that, in the case of "illegal" Mexican migrants to the USA, where the state does have the technical means to prevent and repress this immigration, its persistence can only mean that it is permitted (Portes 1977). Although there is a danger of functionalism in this formulation, it calls for a brief review of the attitude of recent governments on the question.

Until 1987 the various Italian governments have, willingly or not, neglected the issue of a reform of this outdated system of regulations. As late as January 1980 and March 1982, two proposals were put forward by various Ministers, all Christian Democrats, that did not contain any substantial reform of the situation, but only stressed the need to control the "criminal" aspects of this form of immigration. The notion of "criminality" in relation to foreign migrants groups will be developed in later chapters. What is striking here is the fact that although "illegal" immigrants can receive an "injunction to leave" the country, very few foreigners have actually had to leave Italy as a result of this. For example in 1985, out of 423,004 foreign citizens legally resident in Italy, only 14,882 have been "asked to leave the country" (but often either ignored the injunction or came back from other border points), and as few as 1,304 have actually been expelled (CENSIS 1986). In 1986 two new proposals have been put forward, one of them only very slightly amending the existing regulations and the other substantially improving it, but it seemed unlikely that the second one will be approved. The only exception to this pattern was that in 1982 a government circular allowed workers who could persuade their employers to grant them a regular job contract and who entered Italy before the issue of this circular, to regularize their position, even if they had been working illegally up to then. But since few employers could be persuaded to do that and the time to regularize was comparatively short, only very few migrants were regularized.

The ethnic division of labour

It is possible to conclude that the government and the state it represents have maintained the "clandestinity" of most foreign migrants and therefore the "flexibility" of their labour. To give an idea about the presence of "clandestine" workers in Italy it can be mentioned that while in 1981 the Minister of Interior issued 134,461 sojourn permits to citizens from countries outside Europe, North America or Australia (which should equal the number of residents given the fact that sojourn permits must be renewed every year), estimates on the presence of Third World immigrants were already at around 400,000 (10). The status quo is most enthusiastically endorsed by the category of petty bourgeois that employs most heavily this kind of labour (e.g. small restaurant owners) which is usually represented by the DC. The very low number of foreign workers expelled from Italy mentioned above, supports the hypothesis that the state allows this situation as it is beneficial for these sections of the society (cf. Portes 1977 for the case of "illegal" Mexicans in the USA). The trade unions, the PCI and a section of the DC (which also includes the DC-controlled CISL trade union) are afraid that this situation will bring about a split in the labour movement and a lowering of the price of labour. They therefore advocate a greater regularization of the migrants already present in Italy and a restriction on further immigration, as will be shown in chapter 6.

Finally it should be pointed out that, following the segmented labour market theory (cf. Mingione 1981, pp. 56-57, Paci 1982, pp. 46-53, Poiré 1979) this pool of labour does

not amount to the "classical" functions of the "reserve army of labour" since, as it is largely concentrated in the lower "unprotected" tertiary sector and therefore is not competing with the "protected" working class or service workers. However in the future it may be competing with the "weak" quota of the labour market (the young, the old, women) in case of an increase of unemployment and crisis of the assistenzialismo system of state subsidies. This situation applies largely to the major urban centres, like Milan, but it might be slightly different in the other "two Italies" where Third World immigrants are also in the "non-protected" segments of the labour market, not just in the service sector, but also in the small-scale industrial sector in the Centre-North-East and in the primary sector (e.g. fishing, but also to some degree, agriculture) in the South. In these cases competition and conflict might be greater.

3.4 The Milanese context

A brief analysis of the specificity of the Milanese context of immigration within the broader Italian one set out above is needed. Economic and geographical aspects will be taken into account in this section, while sociocultural ones will be briefly analyzed in the next section. This is particularly appropriate given that the findings of this study apply to the Milanese case, but they may not be relevant to understand the situation of Eritreans and Egyptians in other cities such as Rome, for example.

At the time of Unity in 1861 Milan, was a middle-sized town with just 257,000 inhabitants and with predominantly commercial economic activities and just a few textile industries. Between 1861 and the end of the century Milan witnessed its first industrial and financial boom followed by a great increase in its population reaching 321,000 in 1881 (Dalmaso 1971), mainly migrating from the surrounding countryside. While the middle classes tended to live within the old city perimeter delimited by the "Spanish Walls", the migrants tended to live in the surrounding areas where the factories were located thereby bringing about an expansion of Milan's growth beyond its historical perimeter (Boffi et al. 1975). In the fascist period and at a greater rate in the 1950s and 1960s further stages of industrialization and urban growth took place that altered Milan's urban structure. The new expansion occurred primarily outside the ring-road that delimited the first stage of growth between 1861 and 1911. Three main zones therefore developed. In the first place an inner circle delimited by the Spanish Walls with Duomo square (the site of the cathedral and Milan's historical core) at its centre, where only a few upper class families live and where financial activities are concentrated. Secondly a middle ring between the Spanish Walls and the new ring-road, which used to be the working class area before the First World War but that, increasingly in the post-World War II period, underwent considerable reconstruction (also because of the heavy bombing during the war). The middle ring is mainly middle classes and commercial. Finally there is an outer ring between the ring-road and the administrative boundaries where mainly working class housing and some of the

most important industrial complexes are situated (cf. *ibid.* pp.58-82).

Figure 3.2 illustrates this situation with the 20 administrative zones. It should also be pointed out that although the middle ring is now predominantly a middle-class area, there are still some patches with late 19th century housing. The area with these houses is the closest approaching the Chicago school's "zone in transition" (Burgess 1925) or "twilight area" (Rex and Moore 1967). These areas were first inhabited by the migrants from southern Italy before they moved to the outer periphery and were subsequently, to a certain extent, settled by Third World immigrants. It has also the highest proportion of run-down housing in Milan (Comune di Milano 1984, pp.18-27). This has led some authors to speak of a "diffused ghetto" in this area (Caputo 1983). This concept and its applicability to the Milanese situation will be discussed in chapter 4.

Milan reached its peak in terms of population in the early 1970s when it had around 1.7 million inhabitants (Mingione 1981, p.117). This was the end of the economic boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s with heavy industrialization, immigration from the South and urban growth. From 1974 onwards Milan's population declined to around 1.5 million in 1983 (11). This was due partly to a cessation of the migratory movement towards Milan from southern Italy, partly to a decrease in birth rates and partly to the fact that many people, primarily working class, went to live in the small municipalities of the hinterland. Therefore the Province of

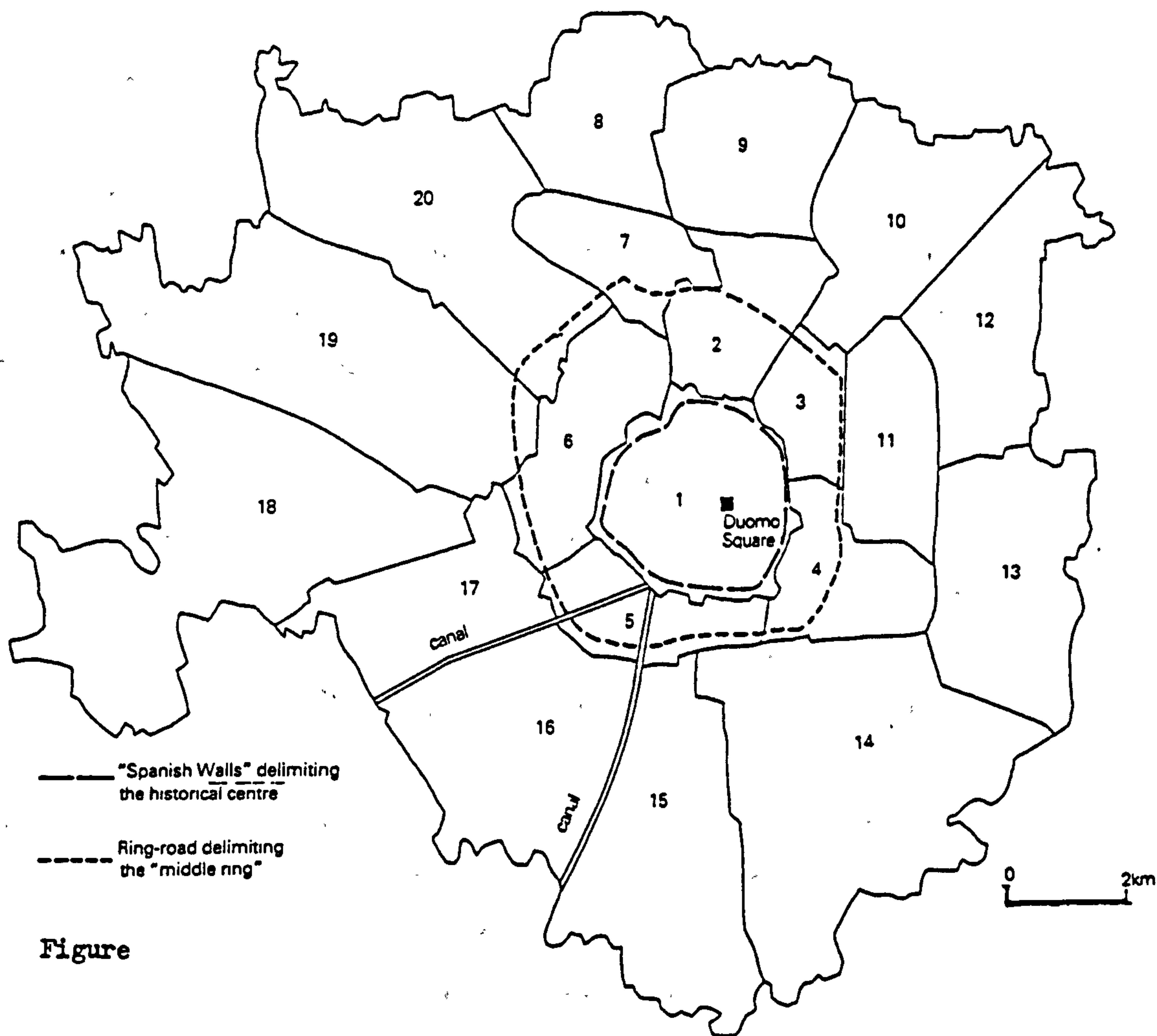


Figure 3.2 Milan: administrative areas and historical zones

Milan, more or less coinciding with "greater Milan", had around 4 million inhabitants in 1983 (12). In spite of the fact that Milan experienced a decline of the industrial manufacturing sector from the 1970s onwards, through technological innovation and growth of the tertiary sector, it has retained its place as Italy's leading industrial, financial and commercial centre (Mingione 1981, Bagnasco 1977) that it has enjoyed since the 1960s (Dalmasso 1971).

Also, because of its relatively greater industrial and economic diversification, it has suffered less in the period of industrial restructuring during the 1970s than cities like Turin or Genoa based on a single industry. But, as noted above, technological innovation which had such a great impact in Milan has not been able to reach certain sectors, like for example the catering one or the cleaning one. These sectors are to a large extent filled by the "new" immigration, in particular Egyptians in the first and Eritreans in the second. In these sectors there is a shortage of local labour because they are considered "low status" jobs and because the employers prefer to utilize the "flexible" and non-unionized foreign labour (13). The labour demand in the cleaning sector comes from middle-class families who have traditionally been used to utilize a maid to help them with house work and who find it convenient to employ foreign workers because of their "cheapness" especially in terms of social security. The demand for domestic help is also increased by the crisis of the welfare state (subsidies for children, creches, etc.) and the greater labour force participation of women who therefore "need" domestic help (cf. Mingione 1983a, 1983b).

Finally, as far as social classes are concerned, Milan has traditionally had a strong bourgeoisie and a strong working class as compared to the Italian average. However in the last decade there has been a significant growth of workers employed in the "advanced", "protected" tertiary sector. Politically the Milanese municipality has a strong Communist Party (the main party), followed by the DC (which in Milan is the second party) and Socialist and Republican parties (the latter being a centrist "liberal" party) which are stronger than the national average. In general Milan is considered in Italy as the country's "moral capital", not only for its economic weight, but also because of its seemingly "northern European efficiency". It also has a strong "liberal" tradition (it was Italy's main Enlightenment centre in the 18th and 19th centuries) and a radical one, not only because of the importance of the PCI (among the working class and the intelligentsia), but also because it was one of the main centres of the social movements (to the left of the PCI) that developed in Italy after 1968. At the time of study the Milanese municipality was run by a Communist-Socialist coalition for the second consecutive term. Since then, one of the most important functions the Municipality performs, in relation to the topic of study, is the management of part of the stock of public housing, amounting in 1983 to nearly 80,000 housing units, that is over 10% of the total Milanese housing stock (Comune di Milano 1984, p. 20). As will be seen in later chapters, part of this housing stock owned by the Municipality (but not that owned by the state) can be granted to foreigners "in case of grave need".

3.4 The cultural context

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the cultural context is important in two ways. In the first place the hegemonic cultural discourses will, following Gramsci (1975, p.59), form the terrain on which human beings gain consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. These cultural discourses (or "ideologies", in Gramsci's words) especially of a political kind, will form the terrain on which also the migrants will establish their allegiances and negotiations and wage their struggles. They are discourses in that they may transform their content over time and contain an "ideological" element that may legitimate the aims of some social groups under particular historical and political circumstances, but also provide a "world view". In the second place it will be important to define the ideological legacy of the "host society's" perception of "the other", which will constitute the reservoir of racist ideologies that may be applied also to the migrants (cf. Hall 1980). These two issues will be briefly analyzed subsequently.

Hegemonic cultural discourses

A comprehensive cultural history of Italy's hegemonic cultural discourses is not available. However from the discussion in previous sections of the chapter and from a few works (Tullio-Altan 1986, Sassoon 1985, Gramsci 1975) a brief summary can be reconstructed. The historical weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie has already been noted above. For this reason also the main cultural discourse that is related to

this class, namely that of liberalism has been rather weak in Italy, especially in terms of the number of people it influenced and of its political weight. For example, the parties representing this class and ideology, the PRI and PLI (14), have never achieved more than 8% of the vote in an election. However because of the influence they had during the Risorgimento (the movement for the unification of Italy) they still carry some cultural weight. Some liberal aspects were introduced in the Italian constitution, such as the defence of private property and enterprise and the principle of equality of every citizen before the law. As far as religion is concerned, even though freedom of religious practice is guaranteed, Catholic Christianity remains the state religion and there is still a great discretionary power on the part of the authorities over the foundation of new non-Catholic places of worship (Disegni 1983, pp.60-61). In general the impersonality and impartiality of the state and the bureaucracy does not seem to apply very much in Italy where these two social functions work primarily on a clientelistic basis (cf. Tullio-Altan 1986).

Catholicism has been one of the dominant cultural discourses in Italy which, from a political point of view, gained importance after the Second World War when the Catholic masses entered the arena of politics and established Italy's largest party, the DC, which is committed, among other things, to safeguard the importance of the moral and religious values of Catholicism in Italy. The role of the Church in Italy as a political institution and of Catholicism as an ideology can be related to the fact that they performed

social and cultural unifying functions in a country historically dominated by foreign powers. The DC has been the party more closely approaching the model of clientelistic politics, with its various factions representing a constellation of interest groups. Yet another two distinguishing traits of this cultural discourse are its universalism and its solidarism. In spite of the particularism of the system of mediations of the Catholic world, its system is open to everybody with the "right connections" and stems from the "catholic" function of the Roman Church, as Gramsci (1979) also noted. The solidaristic aspect stems from the fact that instead of promoting individual competition as in the liberal attitude stemming from Protestantism (cf. Weber 1976), it promotes cooperation among fellow-human beings, an attitude coming from the notion of charity. This assumes quasi-socialist connotations in those sections of the Italian Catholic world that include parts of the labour movement. These features have been important in terms of the attitude of these sections of the Catholic world towards Third World immigrants (see chapters 6 and 7).

The final main cultural discourse in Italy is what may be termed a "radical" one. It is as varied as the Catholic one, ranging from the reformist ideology of the socialist party to the revolutionary ones of the various post-1968 movements to the left of the PCI. Of course the Communist Party is the dominant social and political force within this sector of Italian society. It is especially strong among the working class and the intellectuals. At the grass-root level its

organization resembles that of the Church, with the "social circle" taking the social functions of the parish (cf. Kertzer 1979). The single most important influence has been the work of Antonio Gramsci (e.g. 1975) whose originality has also meant a greater political and ideological independence of the PCI from Moscow than most other Communist parties. For example it has repeatedly criticized Soviet foreign policy, a point that has some bearing on the position of Eritreans in Milan since part of their claims imply a rejection of the role of the Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa. In terms of internal class relations, although it has always had at the centre of its concerns the interests of the working class, it has been open to represent the interests of other social groups as well. However it has been some of the various political and social movements to the left of the PCI, especially strong in Milan, that have granted some of the most significant support to Third World immigrants and Eritreans in particular, as will be demonstrated in later chapters. This is on the one hand because some of them have historically broken away from the PCI on the issue of its too mild criticism of the USSR (especially in relation to the invasion of Czechoslovakia), on the other hand because of their greater concern with struggles in the Third World and their greater readiness to support the struggle of the marginal masses not clearly part of the working class.

The racist ideological legacy

The historical heritage of ideological images of "the other" constitutes a reservoir of racist stereotypes directed towards people in the present day. These ideological

stereotypes may have an origin that is not directly related to its practical social functions, but "inform" discriminatory practices (Miles 1982) (15). In Italy three main sets of stereotypes can be identified, namely those against Jews, against blacks (from the colonies in particular) and against Islam. In Milan (and other northern cities too) there is also the prejudice of northern Italians against Southerners.

In many European countries the "Jewish question" in the 19th century became one of the main focuses for the development of biologically constructed racist ideologies. Here is not the place to discuss the origins of the Jewish question (cf. Mosse 1980), but it might be speculated that a strong tradition of antisemitism could function as a reservoir of racist ideologies and feelings about other ethnic groups as well. Although in Italy like in the rest of Christian Europe Jews were the object of religious antisemitism, as De Felice (1972) argues, in Italy from the 18th century a Jewish question no longer existed. On the contrary, the main tendency was for the Jewish community to assimilate. This can be related to the fact that in Italy Jews never had the monopoly of commercial capital they enjoyed in other European countries, as Poland, for example. Consequently the classical stereotypes against the Jews were not widespread in Italy (ibid. pp.16-24). Also the development of biological doctrines aiming to "prove" the "racial inferiority" of Jews were nearly absent in Italy and the few "theories" lacked the positivist approach prevalent in other European countries (e.g. France and Germany). The "racial laws" against the Jews

passed in 1938 were more a result of the political alliance with Germany than of actual antisemitic persuasions of most of the fascist regime (ibid., Mosse 1980, Di Nola 1973). The absence of an explicit antisemitic racist discourse in Italy has also been related to the weakness of its post-unitary nationalism, for which various reasons have been put forward (cf. De Felice 1972, pp.31-32, Gramsci 1977 pp.61-62).

The absence of a developed biologically-based racist discourse has meant that other ethnic groups and nationalities that Italians have encountered socially as a result of colonialism, for example, were not constructed in terms of "biologically inferior races". Unfortunately the material on Italian racism against groups other than the Jews is virtually absent. It can be mentioned however, that the colonization of the Horn of Africa from the end of the 19th century gave Italians the opportunity to develop a kind of racism that, even though lacking biological or theoretical bases, was probably stronger than that against the Jews (Mosse 1980, p.215). For example it has been reported that, on the eve of the Adwa battle in 1896 where the Italians had been defeated by the Abyssinians, the Italian officers thought of blacks as "cowards and inferior human beings" and that they were fighting against "dark and barbarian Africa" (Del Boca 1985 pp. 654, 627). In spite of this it is also true that many of the Italian settlers who lived in Eritrea and Ethiopia intermarried with indigenous people. The historically and geographically limited extent of Italian colonialism, the virtual absence of any substantial migration to Italy from the colonies, coupled with the lack of an

explicit theoretical racist doctrine, all meant that a racist discourse towards blacks, including Eritreans, did not really develop in Italy.

It would be interesting to know the Italian attitude towards Arabs of the Libyan colony, but it has not been possible to find data on this topic. However there is a long-standing tradition of diffidence towards Muslims contained in popular sayings dating from the middle-ages, when Italian regions and ships were often raided by various Muslim groups. "Saracenes" has often been a synonym for "barbarians" and the saying "mamma li Turchi" ("mother, the Turks") is applied when threatening people are encountered. "To speak Arabic" means to speak an incomprehensible language, while from a religious point of view, the Muslims are considered "infidels" and the Crusades a "civilising mission". It can be noted that these sayings lack biological connotations also because they emerged before the emergence of biology as a science and were maintained through commercial and military rivalry between Italy and the Muslim world, rather than through a substantial Muslim presence in Italy up to the present. However Egyptians in Milan in the 1980s might be expected to suffer as a result of this legacy.

In more recent times, a new form of racist ideology and set of discriminatory practices emerged, at least in northern Italy. This was a result of the massive migration from the South to the northern Italian towns of the 1950s and 1960s. The people who migrated spoke different dialects (16), often not mutually understandable with the Italian that was used

throughout the education system and which was more widespread in the North than in the South. As a result of this latter aspect, many of the migrants were illiterate (Ascoli 1979). The main racist stereotype towards southern Italians, is the word terroni, related to the word terra, meaning earth or land and therefore stigmatizing the rural origins of the migrants. However in this case also, racist stereotypes were more of a cultural than of a biological kind, constructed around notions of "disreputable lifestyles" and "backwardness". In spite of this, notions of "laziness", "dishonesty" and "cowardice" were also applied. Finally the saying that "Garibaldi instead of uniting Italy, has divided Africa" suggests a comparison between "Southerners" and "Africans" a term which, as will be seen in chapter 8, is coincident with that of Marocchini (Moroccans), denoting both Arab and black Africans. However the sociocultural and physical differences between northern and southern Italians were not sufficiently great to prevent a gradual assimilation after a few years, especially in a town like Milan where southern employment was more diversified than in Turin, where there was a strong dualism between the southern Fiat workers and Turinese bourgeoisie.

3.5 Conclusion

The host society's immigration background has several features that are relevant for the understanding of the "new" Third World immigration. From a sociopolitical point of view the state plays an important role in civil society characterized by the influence of political parties and other

social groups operating on the basis of a clientelistic system of mediations which results from the historical specificity of the Italian road to capitalism. This is important in understanding the strategies adopted by the migrants groups, and the Eritreans in particular, to gain access to resources. From a socioeconomic point of view, the more recent developments of the Italian economy, labour market and system of class relations, have brought about a relative shortage of labour in the "unprotected" lower tertiary sector, especially in the big towns of the industrialized North-West and in Rome. This also means that the migrants on the whole do not enter the native working class. Their class situation is also supported by the system of regulations concerning foreign immigration that push the immigrants to become "clandestine" workers and therefore a "flexible" pool of cheap labour. All these aspects apply also to Milan in particular, which has spearheaded many of the recent transformations of Italian society. In Milan Third World immigrants have substituted southern migrants, but with the crucial difference that the latter entered the "central" working class while the former did not. From the point of view of housing, some areas of Milan's middle ring approach the "twilight area" where immigrants have often settled in other cities too. From a cultural point of view Catholicism, radicalism and to a lesser extent, liberalism are the dominant politico-cultural discourses that migrants have to learn in order to be able to "play" Italian politics. As it will be seen later, the Eritreans are better able to perform this task than the Egyptians. Finally although in Italy there is a partial ideological legacy of racist stereotypes towards

"the other", this has been more of a cultural than of a biological kind.

Having analyzed the background to emigration in the previous chapter and the context of immigration in the present one, the next chapter will examine the main demographic, employment and housing characteristics of Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan.

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

- (1) On the delicate issue of the "revolutionary" character of fascism, cf. De Felice (1970).
- (2) In Italy the Prime Minister, rather than the President, leads the government.
- (3) These points and those of the following paragraph can be further pursued in a series of articles in Paci (ed. 1978).
- (4) See chapter 1 for a definition.
- (5) Cf. Triglia's data (1978), reported also in Sassoon (1985, p.93)
- (6) But migrants to France and Belgium tended to be more permanent than those to Germany and Switzerland. Also the latest stages of European migration coincided with the earlier ones towards northern Italy.
- (7) At the time of writing (1987) the situation might be changed as there have been rumours that a new law is about to be introduced.
- (8) In summary, these norms are contained in a trade union publication called Norme per l'Impiego in Italia di Lavoratori Esteri, edited by CISL, Milan (1980).
- (9) Quoted in Milano Sindacale, March 1983: "Lavoratori Immigrati e Rifugiati", p.16.
- (10) The first figure is calculated from the Ministry of the Interior's data cited in Hornziel (1986, p.29) and the second from estimates by an Italian research institute (CENSIS, in *ibid.*, 1986, p.33).
- (11) According to data cited in Comune di Milano (1983).
- (12) According to data cited in Comune di Milano (1985).
- (13) Cf. Peach (1968) on Britain's West Indians as a "replacement" population.
- (14) The former is the Republican Party and the latter the Liberal Party. In spite of some differences, on the whole they share ideologies and policies.
- (15) The specific relation between racist ideologies and discriminatory practices towards Eritreans and Egyptians will be discussed in chapter 8.
- (16) The term "dialect" is used only as a descriptive term in relation to the "official state language", even if it carries some derogatory connotations.

CHAPTER 4: THE NATURE OF THE TWO IMMIGRANT GROUPS

This chapter examines some aspects concerning demographic, occupational and housing patterns and processes of the two groups, leaving the more "qualitative" aspects like ethnic identity, ethnic relations, etc. to later chapters. The demographic aspects of the group, like numerical size, sex-ratio, age structure, etc., are the result of the network of migration, but also constrain the social lives of the two migrant groups in Milan, affecting for instance the possibilities of intermarriage, the degree of ethnic solidarity, forms of employment and chances of racist reaction from the "host society" (1). In this respect it can be hypothesized that the smaller size and more balanced sex and age-structure of the Eritrean group is one of the factors bringing about the greater ethnic solidarity and endogamous marriage of Eritreans with respect to the Egyptians. On the other hand the different patterns of employment and even more so, of housing, between the two groups, can only partly be explained by the nature of the network process, but point to questions that will be tackled in later chapters dealing with the different ethnic politics of the two groups.

4.1 The problem of data

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the regulations concerning foreign immigration, make it very hard for the immigrants to be in a regular position vis a vis the Italian authorities. In this way they become not only "illegal", but

also "undocumented" and therefore do not appear in any official statistics. It is therefore impossible to have any reliable figures not only on the total population of the various immigrant groups, but also on employment, housing, etc. The only accurate statistics available concern the number of sojourn permits (that have to be renewed every year) issued up to 1984 by the police authorities and the number of foreign citizens registered as residents in Milan's municipality, with a few demographic details, also up to 1984, (Comune di Milano 1985, Melotti et al. 1985). The 1981 Census is not of much use, not only because it misses all the "illegals", but also because, surveying the year 1980, it comes before the major wave of immigration that occurred from 1980 to 1984. Moreover the lack of reliable figures has been instrumentalized by the media and the state authorities (including the police), minimizing or, more usually, exaggerating the number of "foreigners" present in Milan and in Italy, according to their interests.

Few Italian works on the topic of Third World immigration have been published. A rather unhelpful example is a book by Hornziel (1986) who, after having analyzed the official statistics and the legislative framework, comes up with a survey based on as few as 10 questionnaires for Tunisians and 10 for "NorthAfricans" in Sicily, 10 for Eritreans and 10 for Philipinos in Rome and 10 for Moroccans and 10 for "others" in Milan. A more dignified attempt, limited to Milan, but referring to 14 different ethnic groups, has been carried out by a team of urban planners (Caputo, ed. 1983). It was based on 450 questionnaires, but asked the more "traditional"

sociological questions about employment, residence, date of migration, etc. Finally the most recent and comprehensive attempt has been by Melotti, Aimi and Ziglio who not only produced a large-scale survey (500 questionnaires for as many as 27 different groups), but also supplemented it with some participant observation carried out by Dr. Aimi, even if on several different groups. Unfortunately only a small summary of their research has yet been published (Melotti et al. 1985).

The only figures that can be produced are therefore at best careful estimates, based on the available data on residents as well as on personal observations and interviews, especially concerning aspects such as employment, housing, family groups, that are not recorded in the above publications. Before examining all these aspects concerning Eritreans and Egyptians, the figures concerning the size of some of the major immigrant groups (leaving aside European and North American ones) can be analyzed in Table 4.1. This gives an idea of the dimensions of the total immigrant population (in the years 1984-85) by which to contextualize the two groups under consideration. The percentages refer to the Milanese population of 1,560,000 in 1983 (Comune di Milano 1983).

If these figures can be accepted as giving at least the dimensions of the population of the main immigrant groups from non-European and North American countries, the first thing that can be noted is that while the Egyptian group is definitely the most numerous one accounting for some 30% of

Table 4.1: estimate of major immigrant groups in Milan,
1984-85

Maghreb (mainly Tunisia		
and Morocco).....	ca. 3,000 -4,000	= ca. 0.2%-0.4%
Egypt.....	ca. 10,000-15,000	= ca. 0.6%-1.0%
Asian Arab states.....	ca. 2,000- 3,000	= ca. 0.1%-0.2%
Iran.....	ca. 1,500	= ca..... 0.1%
Turkey.....	ca. 1,000	= ca..... 0.1%
Somalia.....	ca. 1,000	= ca..... 0.1%
Eritrea/Ethiopia (mainly Eritrea).	ca. 2,500	= ca..... 0.2%
West Africa (mainly Ivory Coast,		
Nigeria and Zaire).....	ca. 2,000	= ca..... 0.1%
Cape Verde, Seychelles, Mauritius.	ca. 1,000	= ca..... 0.1%
El Salvador.....	ca. 1,500	= ca..... 0.1%
rest of Latin America (mainly		
Argentina, Brazil and Chile).....	ca. 4,000	= ca..... 0.3%
Philippines.....	ca. 2,000	= ca..... 0.1%
India and Sri Lanka.....	ca. 1,000	= ca..... 0.1%
China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.....	ca. 2,000	= ca..... 0.1%
Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.....	ca.....500	= ca..... 0.1%
Total.....	ca.35,000-42,000	= ca. 2.2%-2.7%

Source: personal estimates.

the total foreign immigrant population (taking 12,000 as the size of the former and 40,000 that of the latter), the Eritrean/Ethiopian one, although probably still the second largest national group, accounts for only 6.25% of the population and is not significantly greater in size than most other groups. With the exception of Egyptians, no single national group remotely approaches 1% of the Milanese population, and all Third World immigrants constitute only a very small proportion of it.

4.2 Demographic aspects of the two groups

Out of an estimated total population of 2,500, probably at least 2,000 are "true" Eritreans, either born there or born in Ethiopia from Eritrean families, while a few hundred would be either Ethiopians, or half Ethiopian-half Eritreans. A team of researchers (Melotti et al. 1985) estimates the immigrant population from the Horn of Africa as being around 3,000, of whom less than 500 are Somalis (2). The figure for the Eritrean/Ethiopian group would thus be similar to the above one. On the other hand the leaders of the Eritrean community insist that the figure should be put at around 1,500. This is surely an underestimate, as the number of "Ethiopians" (3) registered as resident in Milan's municipality was 1,596 in 1984 (Comune di Milano 1985, Melotti et al. 1985) and it cannot be assumed that there were no "undocumented" immigrants. In the fact the leaders probably want to "play down" the importance of their community vis a vis the Italian authorities from which they

fear repression, because they are already in the front-line of the immigrants' scene.

According to the Municipality, 1,596 "Ethiopians" were registered as residents in 1984 (cf. Comune di Milano 1985, Melotti et al. 1985), in the same year the police authorities (Questura) issued only 1,276 sojourn permits for Ethiopian citizens (4). The difference between the two figures is explained by the fact that while in theory foreigners should renew their sojourn permit every year in order to be formally legal, the Municipality registers them as residents for five years upon the presentation of such a permit (5). The former figure thus represents what may be termed as "semilegal" immigrants and includes the latter which represents "legal" ones. The figure of 1,596 obviously cannot give an exact dimension of the whole Eritrean/Ethiopian population because it does not take into account "illegal" immigrants. However, if the figure of 2,500 can be accepted as an estimate of the total Eritrean population, "semilegal" immigrants would then amount to 63%, while "legal" ones (a sub-category of "semilegal") to 51% of the estimated Eritrean population.

Table 4.2 summarizes the available data of the Municipality on the two groups under consideration. The figure quoted above of 1,596 "Ethiopians" registered as residents (in 1984), is given by the total number of residents minus the number of those "born abroad". This category is not taken into consideration, because it is impossible to distinguish within it between those Italians who were born in Ethiopia and "Ethiopians" who have acquired Italian citizenship (very

few such instances have occurred, according to an official of the "citizenship department" of Milan's municipality). On the other hand, a number of them are probably the children of "mixed" marriages, usually between Italian men and Ethiopian women, dating from the colonial or immediate post-colonial era. It should also be noted that the figure reported under each heading refers to the total amount of persons falling under that category up to that year and not to the number of persons who were registered for the first time under that category, that year. For example the figure under the heading "Foreigners born in Italy" in 1984, referring to "Ethiopia", that is 241, does not actually represent the number of "Ethiopians" born in 1984, but the total amount of "Ethiopians" born in Italy and registered to Milan's municipality up to 1984.

Table 4.2: Ethiopians and Egyptians resident in Milan's municipality, by citizenship and place of birth

	Italians born abroad.	Foreigners born abroad	Foreigners born in Italy	Total
1979				
ETHIOPIA	889	481	86	1,456
EGYPT	1,699	596	110	2,405
1983				
ETHIOPIA	986	1,234	214	2,434
EGYPT	3,171	1,847	354	5,372
1984				
ETHIOPIA	994	1,355	241	2,590
EGYPT	3,115	2,215	293	5,613

Source: Comune di Milano (1985)

Table 4.2 shows that, from 1979 to 1984, there has been a rather dramatic increase of 181% in the number of "semilegal" Ethiopians, discounting "Italians born abroad". This increase is virtually equally to be ascribed to the increase in "foreigners born abroad" (i.e. those "Ethiopians" who migrated to Milan) and to that in "foreigners born in Italy" (i.e. the offsprings of the migrants). The increase in this period reflects both the worsening of the war situation between the Ethiopian regime and the Eritrean liberation fronts and the labour requirements of the "host society". From 1979 to 1984 the yearly average number of births has been 31. There are therefore 155 children who in 1985 would not have been over 5 years old. Also the 86 born before 1979 would not be more than 10 years old, given the relatively recent character of Eritrean migration.

The only other information given by the Municipality (reported in Melotti et al. 1985), is about the sex-ratio. For the "Ethiopians" it is about 60% female and 40% male, that is, overall, a quite balanced sex-ratio. Moreover, taking into account the fact that as this percentage refers only to documented residents, it might slightly underestimate the male population which has more problems in being in a regular position than the female one, which finds authorized jobs more easily in the domestic sector (5). Although there are no data on age groups or years of birth except for the above, on this basis and from observations, interviews, etc. the following main age groups, subdivided by sex, can be estimated. Table 4.3 shows that the age structure of the Milanese Eritrean population is quite differentiated.

Table 4.3: estimate of major Eritrean age groups, divided by sex (1984)

Male and Female	0-10	years old	=ca.10%	(mainly born in Italy)
Male and Female	10-19	"	"	=ca.10% (mainly born Eritrea)
Male	20-39	"	"	=ca.20%
Female	20-39	"	"	=ca.30%
Male	40-59	"	"	=ca.10%
Female	40-59	"	"	=ca.20%

Source: personal estimate

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the estimated total population of Egyptian immigrants in Milan is somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000, as also reported in Melotti et. al. (1985). This was confirmed by an authoritative spokesman of the Egyptian community. However it is probable, according to the same sources, that while in the years 1982-1984 the actual number was closer to the latter figure, more recently (1985-1986) it has dwindled towards the former one. This is because of tougher control on immigration, of expulsions by the Italian authorities and spontaneous return to the homeland either because of failure of the migratory strategy (also due to a probable saturation of the labour and housing markets) or because the strategy itself was conceived as temporary.

In contrast with the attitude of the Eritrean leaders, the Muslim Centre claims that the total Milanese Muslim population is between 40,000 and 50,000, probably double the whole Muslim population, which amounts to about 20,000-25,000 plus at most a few thousand Milanese Muslims. The Egyptian population, which, according to leaders of the Muslim Centre

is about 50% of the total Muslim population, is similarly overestimated. This may be because of an effort to get recognition for their religion in order to get authorization for a "proper" mosque (cf. chapter 8). On the contrary, sources from the Egyptian consulate underestimate the number of Egyptians at about 6,000 probably because they do not want to admit that the percentage of "illegal" immigrants is quite high.

Looking again at Table 4.2, the total number of Egyptian residents in Milan's municipality each year can be calculated. Again, "Italians born abroad" are not included, as they are likely to be either people of Italian families who temporarily migrated to Egypt or people of Jewish Egyptian families who migrated in the late 1950s and managed to get Italian citizenship but are not be classified with the other Egyptians because they hardly interact with them. Thus in 1984 there were 2,508 Egyptian citizens registered as residents in Milan's municipality, while in the same year only 1,608 sojourn permits were issued by the police authorities. Bearing in mind the distinction made above between "semilegal" and "legal" immigrants and that the former category includes the latter (i.e. they are not discrete ones), "semilegal" immigrants were therefore 2,508, while legal ones were 1,608. Taking 12,000 as the estimated total population (including "illegals"), the semi-legal group amounts to about 20% of the total population, while the legal one to only 13%, both percentages being substantially lower than for the Eritrean. The proportion of "illegal" immigrants is an important structural feature differentiating the two

ethnic groups. and is related in turn to the fact that most "legal" Eritreans are women who work as maids. They can get a permit more easily for such a job through specialized recruitment agencies. They can then call close relatives to reside in Italy for "family cohesion". There is also probably a reason linked to the different attitude towards immigration, and, as it will be seen in chapter 7, because of the links of one of their leaders with the "host society" (some bribes have been reported too).

The total increase in "semilegal" Egyptians from 1979 to 1984 has been even higher than that of Eritreans: 255% versus 181% for the Eritreans. The increase has been as much as 271% for those "born abroad" and 157% for those "born in Italy". The decline in the number of those "born in Italy" from 354 to 293 in the years 1983-1984 (cf. Table 4.2), requires some explanation. In April 1983 a national law was approved ruling that the child of either parent who had Italian citizenship was to be considered Italian, whereas before this applied only to the father. The decrease has therefore to be ascribed to those children of "mixed" marriages between an Egyptian man and an Italian woman (this instance is quite frequent, as it will be seen later) who, before 1983 were classified as "foreigners born in Italy", and after, as Italians born in Italy. They therefore disappear from these statistics. The number of these children should be just under 100 (7). The average number of births of both "full" and "half" Egyptians from 1979 to 1983 is 61, while that of only "full" ones is about 38. The increase of both groups from 1979 to 1983 is 210%. Table 4.4 provides estimates about the main age groups,

subdivided by sex, based on the Municipality's data, on personal observations, interviews, etc. The age structure is very unbalanced, by far the most important group being men of "central" working age.

Table 4.4: estimate of major Egyptian age groups, divided by sex (1984)

Male and Female	0-10 years old	=ca..5%	(mainly born in Italy)
Male and Female	10-19 "	"	=ca..5% (mainly born in Egypt)
Male	20-39 "	"	=ca.65%
Female	20-39 "	"	=ca.15%
Male	40-59 "	"	=ca.10%

Source: personal estimate

In summary therefore Eritreans have a much higher birth rate than Egyptians. Leaving aside the children of "mixed" marriages (that is taking into account the 1984 figure) the absolute number of average yearly births of Egyptians from 1979 to 1984 is slightly higher than that of the Eritreans. Comparing it with the respective populations of those "born abroad", the rate is about 1% for the Egyptians against about 2% for the Eritreans. Taking into account also the estimated number of "illegal" immigrants, the difference in relative number of births is even more striking: 0.3% for the Egyptians against 1.2% for the Eritreans. The sex-ratio of Egyptians, as reported by the Municipality data (Comune di Milano 1985) is 77% male against 23% female, a very unbalanced ratio compared with the Eritrean one (40% male vs. 60% female). The greatly different percentage of women is to be ascribed to the different role that women have in Christian Africa as opposed to the Muslim Arab states, that makes the latter very unlikely to carry out a migratory

strategy. Finally, Eritreans are a much smaller group than Egyptians (ca. 2,500 vs. 12,000) but have a much higher proportion of "semilegal" migrants (ca. 63% vs. ca. 20%) and "legal" ones (ca. 51% vs. ca. 13%). They also have a much higher proportion of family groups than Egyptians. Estimates on this topic are provided in Table 4.5. The significance of these demographic factors for the contrasting styles of ethnic politics will be discussed in chapters 5 and 7.

Table 4.5: estimate of main Eritrean and Egyptian family groups (1984)

Eritreans	Egyptians
Single women=20%	Single men=75%
Single women with children=20%-30%	Couples with children=20%
Couples with children=30%-40%	(most "mixed" Eg.-It.)
Single men=10%-15%	Single women=5%

Source: personal estimate

The next section summarizes and compares the housing and employment situation of Eritreans and Egyptians, trying to identify patterns of segregation. Explanations of these trends in terms of ethnic politics will be provided in chapter 7. These trends are identified on the bases of life histories and interviews with migrant families around these topics, the most significant of which will be summarized in the next two sections, while the more "qualitative" aspects of their social lives will be examined in the following chapters.

4.3 Residential and occupational segregation

In the geographical literature, segregation has been analyzed mainly in terms of spatial residential patterns, adopting quantitative techniques (cf. Duncan and Duncan 1955, Lieberman 1981). However there may also be segregation in terms of "type" of housing tenure and occupation. This kind of segregation may be called "typological" as opposed to "spatial", as it refers to "types" of housing or employment. Thus four categories of segregation can be identified: 1) typological-occupational (i.e. forms of employment that at one level of generalization may correspond to class, at another to economic sector and finally to economic niche); 2) spatial-occupational (i.e. the concentration of one group's economic activity in a particular area, an aspect not widely covered in the literature, but present especially in the case of "ethnic entrepreneurs" (8); 3) typological-residential (i.e. by type of housing, tenure and access); 4) spatial-residential (the "classic" form of urban segregation). The main patterns and trends of Eritrean and Egyptian housing and employment will now be examined according to this four-fold typology.

"Typological"-occupational segregation.

At the level of the economic sector, segregation is very high for both groups since the overwhelming majority of the migrants seems to be employed in the lower tertiary sector or, from the point of view of the segmented labour market approach, in the non-protected reproductive sector (Paci 1980). This sector is often occupied, in industrialized

countries, by Third world immigrants (cf. Mingione 1983a, 1983b). In class terms these immigrants could be characterized as belonging to the marginal proletariat or to the sub-proletariat. In each instance, the most important factors are socioeconomic ones (the labour market and economic requirements) and political-juridical ones (the set of bureaucratic constraints governing foreign immigration to Italy that push the migrants into this economic stratum).

However, within this economic sector and social class, the two immigrant groups are clearly differentiated in terms of occupational niches, the cleaning sector being the most important one for the Eritreans and the catering one for the Egyptians, even if the actual picture is slightly more complicated. The main factors that account for this differentiation are demographic characteristics (particularly the sex-ratio) and the network process. The earlier immigration and predominance of females in the Eritrean case and the even greater predominance of men in the Egyptian one "fit in" with the fact that employment in the cleaning sector is culturally defined as "female" while employment in the catering sector (especially cooks but also, to a lesser extent, waiters and dishwashers) is defined as "masculine" (cf. Carby 1982, Parmar 1982). The "chain-like" network process of migration running along ethnic lines further reinforces this pattern. For example the Eritrean priest, Father Yohannes, acts as a mediator between Eritrean female labour supply and Italian families with labour demand in the domestic sector (cf. chapter 7). The great socioeconomic "weight" of Eritrean female employment in the

cleaning sector "draws" men too in this sector, even if not as domestic workers (in the sense of "maids" that not only clean but also wash, cook, etc.), but often in office cleaning enterprises, as butlers, or just as casual cleaners. While female employment as cleaners in the domestic sector is almost always the case, male employment is slightly more differentiated as there are a few entrepreneurs (e.g. one bar and two restaurant owners, some traders and market sellers, etc.), some who work as "errand boys", while a few work for the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front and some are students and casual workers.

Egyptian employment is almost exclusively male. Probably 70% work in the catering sector, which in Italy is very big especially given the very high number of middle-status restaurants and pizzerias. Probably another 20% perform other kinds of jobs in the "unprotected" service economy (e.g. as carpenters, painters, car mechanics, etc.) or in the small scale industrial sector and another 10% in more upper class forms of employment (entrepreneurs, etc.).

Spatial occupational segregation

This category is not very useful in the present context since both middle class families who are the employers of Eritrean domestic labour, as well as restaurant owners, who are the employers of Egyptian labour, are scattered around the town, although there is obviously a correlation in the first case with predominantly middle class areas, like the historical centre (cf. Fig. 3.1). It may be, however, that some of the restaurants are concentrated in the eastern part of the

middle ring (cf. Fig. 3.1), as is reported by a survey (Caputo, ed. 1983).

"Typological" residential segregation

This concept refers to housing quality as well as forms of tenure and access. Generally speaking, housing for both groups is concentrated in old and degraded types of buildings and is characterized by precarious forms of tenure. Also in this case there are socioeconomic factors, i.e. the very "rigid" housing market that leaves very few empty spaces, as well as political-juridical ones, i.e. the lack of access to state owned public housing and restrictions of access to Municipality-owned housing (cf. Rex and Moore 1967) and its relative scarcity in the Italian and Milanese cases. For both groups the process of finding housing, a resource probably scarcer than employment, is facilitated by the existence of ethnic networks, stronger for the Eritreans than for the Egyptians. But within this general pattern there are marked and important differences between the two groups.

In the Eritrean case four main categories of housing dwellers can be distinguished to which, a fifth one has recently (1984-1986) been added. Firstly there is a substantial, even if not major, group of Eritreans, almost entirely female, residing with their employers, i.e. the "permanent" maids working in middle class families, probably amounting to ca. 20% of the whole group. Secondly probably between 30% and 40% live in case occupate (squats) as, through interviews with members of the community and with the Tenants' Union eleven such squats with an average of over

than 10 Eritrean families have been recorded, even if there probably are more. Thirdly between 20% and 30% live in rented flats, mostly with temporary contracts or no contracts at all. Finally around 20%, mainly young children of "permanent" maids, live in religious institutions. Probably another 10% live with other forms of tenure (pensions, owner-occupiers and council housing). This reflects the situation up to 1983 since when there has been a move from the first and fourth categories to the second and third ones, as "permanent" maids enhanced their social position becoming "daily" ones (9). Also, in 1983 a Municipality law was passed ruling that foreigners could gain access to Municipality-owned housing "in case of grave needs". Therefore in the following years there has been a general move of Eritreans, especially squatters, to public housing that presently accounts for a substantial proportion of the total Eritrean population. An official of the the Tenants' Union who dealt with these cases and some Eritreans told me that there are nowadays between 100 and 150 Eritrean families housed in case popolari. Both squatting and public housing are however forms of housing tenure that are almost totally absent for all migrant groups other than the Eritreans. Again, the dynamics of this pattern will be explained in later chapters.

The pattern for the Egyptian community seems to be far more homogeneous. Probably up to 70% live in rented accomodation in old degraded houses, either with a temporary contract "for foreigners" or without a contract at all. Then there are about 20% living in even more precarious forms of housing,

like Milan's dormitorio (destituted people's hostel) (17) or in a similar Catholic run one, or in pensioni a ore, i.e. pensions rented for 6 hours or so. Finally there is probably another 10% living as owner-occupiers, either among those who have married an Italian woman, or among the wealthier group. No instances of squatting or public housing have been recorded.

Spatial residential segregation

Although some general trends can be identified, there does not seem to be any clear pattern of geographical residential segregation, at least taking the whole town as the unit of analysis. At least three factors explain this pattern, one of them specific to the Eritrean group and the other common to both groups. These are the percentage of Eritreans living with their employers or in religious institutes, the great scarcity of any kind of rented housing that makes ghetto formation quite difficult as the migrants "fill in" any space they can find, and finally the fluidity of the housing situation. In the previous chapter it has been argued that the areas of the middle ring, even if they also contain quite a substantial proportion of middle class housing, is closest to the "zone in transition" of the Chicago school, or of the "twilight area" (cf. Rex and Moore 1967) as there is quite a high proportion of old and degraded housing once inhabited by the Milanese working classes and then by the southern Italian ones, before many of them got rehoused in peripheral public housing. The fact that there is some degree of correlation between this area and concentration of both immigrant housing and "ethnic institutions", has led a team

of architects to talk about a "diffused ghetto" (Caputo, ed. 1983) precisely in the middle ring. However the concept is too impressionistic and the word "ghetto" seems hardly appropriate as the overall degree of segregation seems quite low. Members of the Eritrean group point out that we can speak of segregation, especially in area 3 (cf. Fig. 4.1), only in terms of places of socialization. Moreover the pattern changes according to the number of ethnic groups taken into account (Caputo considers several of them) and the level of segregation usually increases as the unit of analysis decreases from the city as a whole, to an area and to a street. However the concept of a "diffused ghetto" does carry some descriptive value for the Eritreans, excluding those who live with their employers or in religious institutes.

Most of the 11 case occupate are located inside the middle ring, especially in the administrative areas 3 and 4, including 4 big squats with more than 10 Eritrean families living in them (on average at least 22 families for a total of about 90 families) (cf. Fig. 4.1). At least another 3 houses with maybe 4-5 Eritrean families living there are located in the middle ring, plus nearly all Eritrean "ethnic institutions", that is the church, three restaurants and one bar. Areas 3 and 4 are therefore the closest to what could be described as an "ethnically segregated area" or a "diffused ghetto", for the Eritreans. However in the years 1984-1986 with the process of rehousing in council flats, the geographical pattern started to change. The inhabitants of two of the main squats in areas 3, 4 and 6 as well as

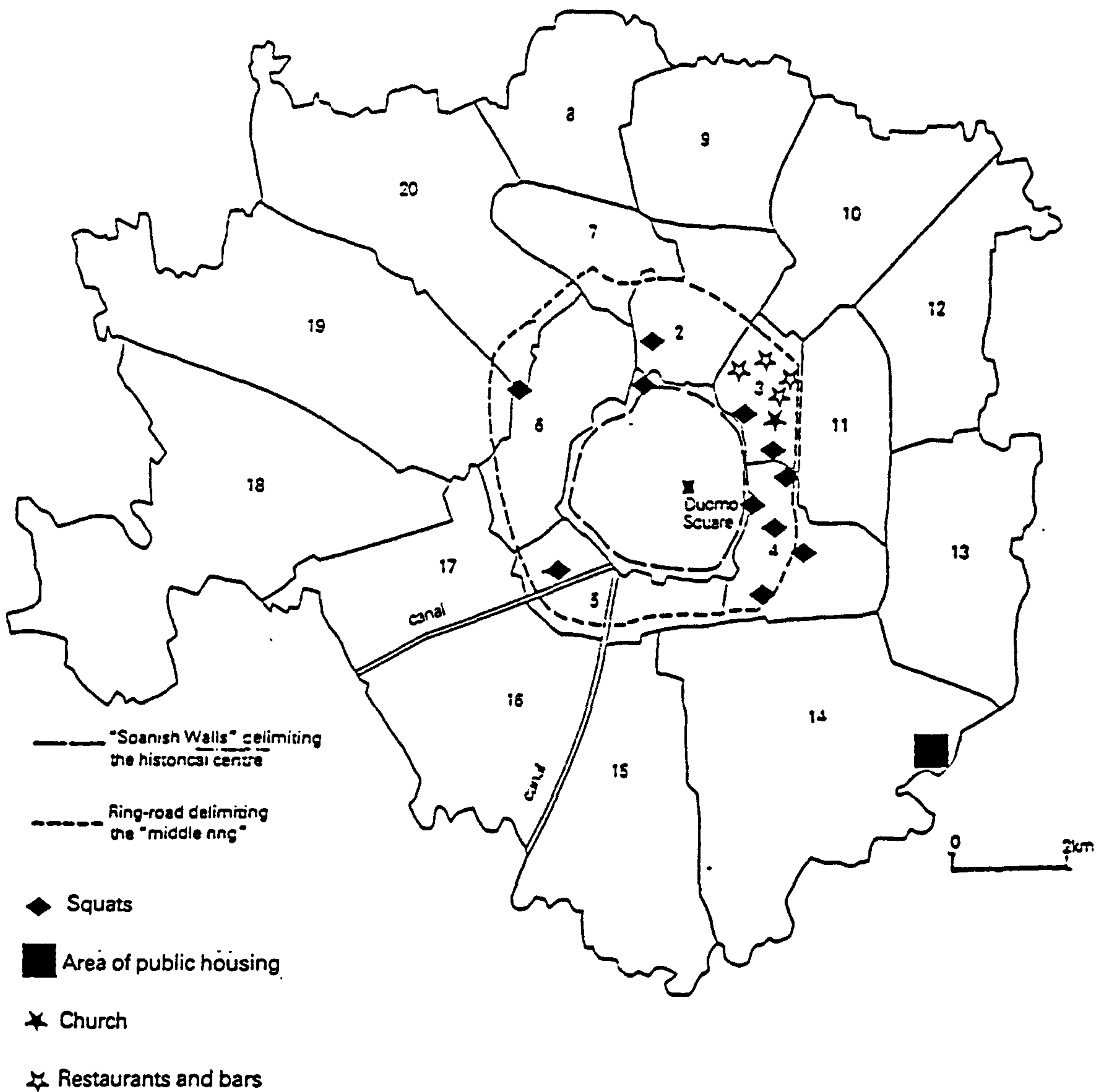


Figure 4.1 Eritreans: residence and "ethnic institutions"

Eritreans in other housing groups, were rehoused in Municipality-owned public housing. According to an Eritrean informant of the 100-150 families who nowadays live in public housing, 54, are located in a neighbourhood in area 14, that is becoming also an "ethnically concentrated" area. Again, including all Eritrean housing groups and taking the whole city as unit of analysis the degree of segregation would be very low, but leaving, aside "permanent" maids and children living in religious institutes, it would increase taking an area, a neighbourhood or even a street as unit of analysis.

As far as Egyptians are concerned, the greater concentration in rented housing (with or without contract), makes the geographical pattern more dispersed, for the reasons stated above. The "mixed" marriages between Egyptian men and Italian women are a further factor of dispersal, in a similar way that "permanent" domestic employment is for Eritreans. Moreover, besides the dormitorio, there is no form of "organized housing" like the squats or public housing from which it is possible to extract a significant amount of data. However through interviews, personal observation, etc., area 5 could be said to have some degree of Egyptian "ethnic concentration" where there are some old case di ringhiera (11) with at least a dozen Egyptians in them, an Egyptian restaurant and a few bars where they meet in the evening. Another area with a perhaps slightly lower Egyptian "ethnic concentration" is area 10 where the Muslim Centre and an Egyptian restaurant are located, while another is situated near the "heartland" of the Eritrean zone, that is in area 3 (cf. Fig. 4.2).

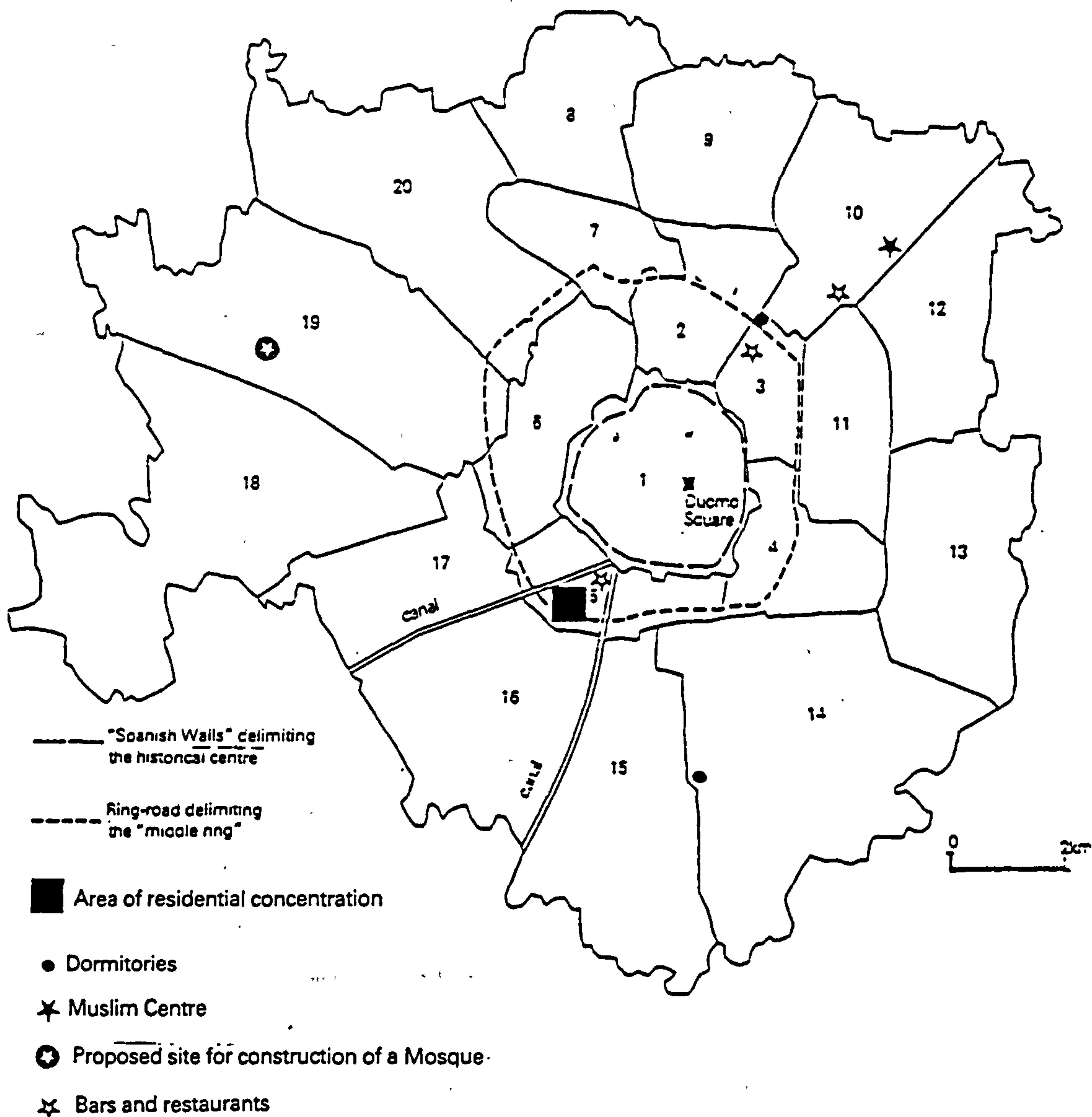


Figure 4.2: Egyptians: residence and "ethnic institutions"

The next two sections will provide a typology of Eritrean and Egyptian migrants, drawn from life-histories and interviews, concerning family units, employment and housing, while the more "qualitative" aspects (such as identity) will be examined in the following chapter.

4.4 A typology of Eritrean migrants

Immigration to Milan happened in two phases. In the first one dating to the early 1970s it was made up mainly by single women who migrated above all for economic reasons and in almost all cases found a job in the domestic sector as maids in middle class families. From the late 1970s to the early 1980s a more substantial quota of immigrants found its way to Italy and Milan in particular, because of the worsening of the war between the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean liberation fronts. This migration was made up not only by single women (who nonetheless remained an important group) but also by married women, often followed first by their husbands and then by the children for whom one of the main reasons to migrate was to avoid the military service in the Ethiopian army that would have meant fighting against the liberation movements in which friends or relatives served. A high rate of female migration applies also within Ethiopia as a whole (O'Connor 1983, p.71). However the war has also encouraged a number of young men around 18-20 years old to migrate on their own. Italy is nearly always chosen because of the colonial links that make the migrants hope for a better treatment than elsewhere. By far the greatest

avenue of employment and source of income is made up by female labour in the domestic sector, that sometimes is the only source of income for the family.

A typology of Eritrean migrants can now be introduced. The main identifying criteria being the kind of family group (i.e. single, married couple, etc.), since the Eritrean group is very differentiated in this respect.

Single women

Although they are not the most numerous type of family group, single women probably make up 20% of the total number of family groups. This group accounts for quite a large part of those Eritreans who migrated in the early 1970s mainly for economic reasons and even though their migration was conceived essentially as temporary, the worsening of the war situation in their homeland in the following period has forced them, in the word of one of them, "to age in Italy without helping it". All of them work as maids in middle class families but one can distinguish between "full time, permanently resident" ones (residing with their employers) and "non-resident ones", working part time or full time, but having accommodation of their own.

Trhas is 38 years old and migrated to Italy in 1974, to earn some money, because of economic difficulties: "as long as I have legs to walk, hands to work and a head to think, I am never going to be poor", she remarked. She came directly to Milan where she had a friend who found her a job as a maid in a family. She has worked and resided permanently in

that family ever since. This, by the way, is also quite a common solution to the housing question which is one of the first and more difficult problems the immigrants have to encounter. Even though she would have liked to go back to Eritrea, the war situation has prevented her from doing so (she is the one who remarked "I suddenly found myself aging in Italy", probably also referring to the fact that, as in those times Eritrean men in Italy were very few, she did not have an opportunity to get married within her ethnic group). She is tired of doing this job and thought things would have been better in Italy. However she does not foresee changing job, because "what else could I do?" Her only days off are, like for all maids, Thursday afternoon and Sundays and on Thursday afternoons she attends a literacy course run by some priests of Caritas (cf. chapter 6), because she is illiterate both in Italian and in her mother tongue, Tigrinya, a rather common feature for this sex-age group. She is quite religious and often attends the "ethnic" religious services and festivals, carried out at Father Yohannes' (an Eritrean priest) church, even though she also attends some EPLF organized events and socializes almost exclusively with "fellow ethnics".

Amleset is 34 years old and comes from a little town near Asmara, also of Tigrinya mother tongue, but illiterate. Although she has been in Italy for 12 years, her knowledge of Italian is barely conversational. She decided also to come to Italy temporarily to make some money, but decided to remain because of the deteriorating war situation in her country. She came directly to Milan already with a job

contract she found through her sister and is therefore residing "legally" in Italy. She worked for various years in a family with whom she also resided, but then she found a "daily" job. I came to know her because some acquaintances of mine asked me if I could help them get them domestic help through my links with the Eritreans. I contacted Father Yohannes who helps many Eritrean women find these jobs. His role will be analyzed further in chapters 5 and 7. In less than a week he sent Amleset. However, after eight days, she declined the offer because the house was too big and heavy for her, a sign that she probably had other employment alternatives. In terms of housing, after she finished living with the family for which she worked, she went to live in a casa occupata where many other Eritrean families live, in area 6, where there are quite a few old decaying houses that are accessible for squatters. However in July 1985 this house was evicted because of safety regulations and the inhabitants, including Amleset, were temporarily housed in a pension paid for by the Municipality before they could move to a public housing flat. This housing pattern (squat-public housing) that involves a certain number of social actors (a leader of the Front, a Tenants' Union, the local authorities) is quite common for the Eritreans, but completely absent for other immigrant groups (see chapter 7, below).

Berkti is 28 years old and although from a Tigrinya-speaking Eritrean family, she was born and brought up in Addis Ababa, where the family had previously migrated. In Addis she went to high school and reached an educational level far above

that of her sex-age peers, also being perfectly bilingual in Tigrinya and Amharic. She came to Italy in 1977 partly because of economic reasons and partly because the political situation was deteriorating and, as she reported, discrimination against Eritreans in Ethiopia increased. She got the first job, "naturally" as maid, in Palermo through a sister and so she also came to Italy with a job contract and is therefore "legal". After a couple of years she came to Milan where she worked for three years as a "permanently resident" maid. In this period she attended an Italian language course at the Volta school (cf. chapter 6), as well as a course in needlework. Three years ago she found a job as a "daily" maid and moved to a rented flat that however soon proved to be too expensive. So she found a new one in which, with a half day a week house cleaning duty, she did not have to pay any rent. Thus both in terms of employment and housing, there has been some social enhancement, as in Amleset's case. The flat was found through some contacts she got through ACLI (12), where she attended a course to get trained to advise maids on rights on contracts, social benefits, pensions, etc. because, she says, if there is not an Eritrean there, the other Eritrean women will not come to the existing centres for this purpose.

Single women with children.

This group accounts for around 20-30% of all types of family groups. In most cases the mother, usually divorced from her husband or a widow, migrated first, followed some years later by the children, although there are exceptions to this pattern. Also in this case there is an important difference

between permanently resident maids and "daily" ones, that this time has also an effect on the lives of the children who would then be brought up usually in Catholic religious institutes. The effects of this situation will be briefly analyzed in chapter 8.

Lete is 36 years old, from Asmara and migrated to Italy in 1973, mainly for economic reasons, but then decided to stay because of the war. She has always worked as a "daily" maid, with regular sojourn and work permits, and went to live in a casa occupata in area 3, where up to 30 Eritrean families lived (cf. Fig. 4.1) As in many cases the squat was "bought" from an Italian family who lived there previously and gives up the "tenure" for sums that go from £200 to £500. In this house she had a relationship with a friend from Asmara (who works as a waiter in a family), from whom she had a daughter who was born in 1979. After a few years the couple split and in 1984 the squat was evicted. After a few weeks in a pensione, the mother and daughter went to live together in a casa popolare in the peripheral area 14. She said that in the process of obtaining public housing she was helped by the Front and the Tenants' Union (13) and remarked that she is much happier to pay a modest amount of money and to have security of tenure (and heating) than to have to pay no rent, but have no security (and no heating). She came to ACLI to ask assistance with some bureaucratic procedures to get state allowances for a child (to which she is entitled as a tax payer) and to make the father contribute for the support of the child. In a way, she is a case in between the previous and the present category as she migrated as a childless

single person, but this case is not frequent as Eritreans put quite a lot of emphasis on marriage.

Ruth is 46 years old and comes from Tigray (the region sharing the language and religion of highland Eritrea) where her eldest son was born, but then migrated to Asmara, where her younger son, Abraham, was born 20 years ago. Having divorced from her husband, who is a shopkeeper in Asmara, she migrated to Italy in 1973, while her children grew up with their maternal grandmother. She worked first as a "permanent" maid, but after a few years she became a "daily" one and went to live in a casa-occupata in area 4, where approximately 15 Eritrean families live. Her "flat", found through Eritrean friends, where she still lives, is made up of a single room that had no sanitary facilities. In 1984 she was joined by Abraham, her younger son, who migrated to avoid the military service, which might have meant fighting against his older brother, who served in the TPLF (Tigray's People Liberation Front). Being over 18, he could not come to Italy with a permit for "family cohesion" and was helped by Father Yohannes who acted as a guarantor, another quite common practice. With the help of other Eritreans in the house, Abraham managed to install sanitary facilities, an interesting example of "self-help" (14). Ruth told me that she also relies on Father Yohannes to get advice when she has employment problems as well as on other matters.

Lemlem was born in Tigray 35 years ago, where she had 4 sons from her husband. In the early 1970s the family migrated to Addis Ababa and after a few years she divorced from her

husband who went to work in Saudi Arabia. She came to Italy in 1979 partly because of the family crisis and partly because of the worsening political situation and was joined two years later by her four sons, the eldest of whom, Haile, was 14. They came with a permit "for family cohesion", as their mother was working regularly in Italy. But because she had a job as a "permanent" maid and therefore had to reside with her employers, the children had to live in a Catholic religious institute until 1984 when Lemlem, through the help of Father Yohannes, found a job as "daily" maid. Then the whole family moved to a casa occupata in area 4, where up to 20 Eritrean families used to live, in overcrowded conditions. In 1985 this squat was evicted and while the majority of the residents were rehoused in area 15, Lemlem's family was given a casa popolare in area 14 following the pattern outlined in Lete's case.

Married couples (with children)

This category probably accounts for around 30-40% of all the family groups. Also in this case the usual pattern is immigration of the parental couple first (but sometimes the woman precedes the husband as she finds a job more easily in the domestic sector) followed a few years later by the children, who then come "for family cohesion", when family immigration is more "consolidated". In more recent years Eritrean couples might have increased, as there is quite a high rate of in-group marriage (see chapter 5).

The Ghebreyesus, husband and wife, came to Italy in 1973, from Asmara. The husband works as a peddler market seller of

Oriental goods at various fairs in Milan and the surrounding small towns. Every three or four years he goes back to Eritrea to import directly the merchandise. His job therefore should not be considered as "street level peddling", but is relatively of higher status as he sometimes has the authorization to sell in "prestigious" fairs, like the Christmas one in piazza Duomo and besides giving good revenues, it also shows the existence of a certain degree of integration in the Italian bureaucratic system, needed to get the authorization (15). This occupation is not uncommon for Eritrean men, often helped by the rest of the family and, to a lesser extent, by the Somalis. The wife works as a maid for an old couple and helps out the husband on Sundays or on holidays. They lived in the same casa occupata in area 4, where Lemlem lived. In 1981 they were joined by their three children (the oldest of whom, Michael, was aged 13 when he arrived) who meanwhile lived with their grandmother in Asmara, while another child was born in Milan. With the arrival of the three children the flat where the family lived, made up of two rooms, had as many as 14 people living in it, as another family of relatives was also there. Luckily in 1985, after the squat had been evicted because of safety regulations, they got rehoused in a casa popolare in area 14 (like Amleset), where more than 50 Eritrean families live, in a few streets.

In the case of the Tesfazyons, instead, it was the father, who migrated in 1976 followed shortly by his wife. He worked as a "factotum" for a famous Milanese fashion house and therefore had a rather good income and so he was in the quite

exceptional position of not needing his wife's income as a maid. In the following years they were joined by their two daughters (the eldest of whom after three years migrated to the USA) and three sons, the eldest of whom, Yonas, was 13 when he arrived in 1980, partly to join their parents and partly because of the war situation. The family lives in the same casa occupata in area 4 where Ruth and her son Abraham also live. The flat, made up of two rooms, had no sanitary facilities, but the family, with the help of other Eritreans living there, managed to install a toilet. Yonas and Abraham managed also to install a lighting system for the staircase of the house which lacked one. This "consolidation" of the squat was carried out after an agreement between all the residents who had to pay something for the equipment. This agreement was reached only after a negotiation with the Italian residents who feared that this might have hindered their chances of getting a council flat, even if this was hoped also by the Eritreans.

Samuel Woldeghiorghis is 30 years old and migrated to Milan in 1978 as a single person, because of the war and political situation. He comes from a big village some 30 miles out of Asmara, where he migrated in the late 1960s. He worked as a part-time cleaner and registered at Milan's University to study geology. Samuel told me that when Italians ask him: "how come you came to Italy?", he answers: "by the same road on which you came to Eritrea", obviously referring to the colonial link. In 1981 he got married to an Eritrean woman he knew from Asmara. The couple had a son, Aaron and a daughter, Ruth. The wife, who works as a "daily" maid, is

the main source of income of the family, but Samuel remarks that as "the Italians managed to find jobs in Eritrea, it is impossible I won't be able to find them in Italy", a sentence similar to that of Trhas', a sign of the confidence many Eritreans have in their capacities and determination they have to employ them. The family lived for 5 years in a small rented flat in area 4, but has been rehoused at the beginning of 1986 in a casa popolare in area 14, where also Lete and the Ghebreyesus live. Within this typology therefore, Samuel has moved from the group of single males, the next to be examined, to the present one of married couples.

Single men

This category is less numerous than the previous ones and accounts for probably around 10-15% of the family groups. The great majority of the members of this group is made up of young men (ca 19-25 years old), who migrate to escape military service. They usually come with a study visa and indeed many are registered at the university or other institutes, even if this is not always possible. However most of them also do unauthorized part-time work, usually as office cleaners, as they cannot get permission for it. There are however also cases of older bachelors or men who divorced. This group is usually "weaker" economically and legally than the previous ones, since it lacks women's presence that is not only a more secure source of income, but of sojourn permits too.

Bereket is 24 years old, comes from Asmara and migrated to Milan in 1981, to avoid military service. He came with a

study visa as he found a place at Milan's university, studying medicine, but he also works part time as a cleaner. He told me it has been relatively easy for him to learn Italian, as he already knew it in his country. For the first three years he lived in a Catholic institute, but in 1984, through some Eritrean friends, he managed to find a room in an old house with outdoor services, in area 5, which is inhabited by quite a few Egyptians.

Berhane is 22 years old and was born in Addis Abeba from an Eritrean family. Although he speaks quite good Tigrinya, his mother tongue is Amharic. He left Ethiopia because of political and "ethnic" problems (discrimination against Eritreans in Ethiopia), even if he is not an ardent Eritrean nationalist, and arrived in Italy at the end of 1984 with a tourism visa. Through Caritas, a Catholic institution (see chapter 6), he found a place in the home of an Italian middle aged person separated from his wife. Because he has no permit Berhane cannot do any "regular" job nor officially register for any course. He does some casual jobs in the cleaning sector and has (unofficially) followed an apprenticeship course.

Tolde is 48 years old and comes from Keren, the provincial capital of the Bilen speaking people of Eritrea. However he speaks very good Tigrinya and Amharic as well as English. In Eritrea he used to be the managing director of a bank but he was sacked when, after the revolution, the bank had been robbed by an Eritrean guerrilla group and he had been accused by the Ethiopian authorities to be an accomplice and

therefore jailed. As a result of this his wife divorced and came to Italy (in Genoa) with her two sons, working as a maid. After he was freed Tolde, who could also speak some Italian, came to Milan in 1984 and went to live in a small rented flat in the northeastern periphery with a distant relative. He has only casual jobs in the cleaning sector and has written to an Italian entrepreneur who used to have his business in Eritrea and now lives in Padua, to seek a more stable employment.

Eritreans and Ethiopians with Italian citizenship

Although this category does not fit the criteria of the present typology, it is obvious why this group should be singled out as a distinct one, as all the regulations concerning foreign immigration that push the migrants into the lower tertiary sector do not apply. Although the majority of the members of this group, who probably make up less than a hundred people, are offspring of marriages between Italian men and Eritrean or Ethiopia women, they are considered as part of the Eritrean/Ethiopian group because (as will be seen in the next chapter) they still interact to a very high extent with the Eritrean group. Only two cases will be briefly mentioned. Piergiorgio was born in Asmara 38 years ago from an Italian father and Eritrean mother, is married to an Eritrean wife and came to Milan in 1975, where he owns an import-export enterprise and is relatively well off. Roberto is 32 years old, was born in Addis Ababa from an Italian father and Ethiopian mother and has worked in Milan as a skilled worker in a small factory for 4 years. He is married

to an Ethiopian woman to whom he sends remittances and whom he visits every year.

4.5 A typology of Egyptian immigrants

The general character of Egyptian immigration is far more homogeneous than the Eritrean one from many points of view including gender, age, family groups. Probably 60-70% of the immigrants have the following characteristics: they are single males, between 20 and 39 years old. The main quota of immigrants came between the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Generally speaking the immigrants come from the big or medium sized towns of the Nile delta and have reached higher education including in many cases university. The main reason to migrate is an economic one: although most immigrants did have some sort of employment in Egypt and often a qualified one, they say that as their earnings were barely above subsistence, they can still earn more in Italy with an unqualified one. However there is often also a social reason for migration, as it is conceived as an enhancement of life opportunities and a good life experience and a lot of emphasis is put on the fact that Italy is a "western" country. Italy, considered as a "western" country, is chosen not out of particular historical-cultural reasons, but because of its geographical vicinity and relative ease of access, even though sometimes it is stressed that it belongs to the same "Mediterranean" area. Most immigrants come with a tourism visa and therefore do not have an authorization to get a "legal" job.

In the following typology four major Egyptian sub-groups can be identified, taking into account not only the type of family groups (as most Egyptian are single males), but also employment (other than in the lower tertiary sector) and marriage with an Italian woman, not an uncommon strategy (as will be seen in chapters 5 and 7) that clears all the problems relative to sojourn, and working permits.

Single men employed in the lower tertiary sector

This is by far the most important category among Egyptians, working mainly in the catering sector. Probably 60% of all Egyptian immigrants fall into this category, while including also single Egyptians with "higher" forms of employment or conversely those with similar forms of employment, but married, it would amount to about 70%. The great majority of these workers have reached higher or university education and came to Italy with a tourism visa. Their sojourn permits do not allow them to seek employment. Therefore nearly all of them work "illegally", without a permit. From the point of view of marriage, given the relative lack of Egyptian women (there are probably around 20 women for 100 men, in marrying age) that make this a difficult, even if viable, option, there are three main options available: a) to remain single; b) to go temporarily to Egypt to get married; c) to marry an Italian woman with all the legal and social benefit that derives from it, by far the most common option.

Mohammed is 31 years old and was born in Cairo. There he reached university education and worked as a teacher. His

father is a shop owner. He migrated to Italy in 1981 because of insufficient earnings in Egypt, but also for the life experience. A friend found him a job in a restaurant and so he migrated "regularly" (and quite exceptionally, from this point of view, taking for granted what he says is true), by himself. to Milan. He followed the usual employment pattern in the catering sector, that is after a first period as a waiter, he became assistant cook and then cook, in a good restaurant/pizzeria. He lamented the fact that he had to work 60 hours a week, but afterwards he started working only half-time as the management of the restaurant employed also another Egyptian. He has four Italian workers under his supervision. In terms of housing he managed to find a small rented studio-flat, in the northeastern periphery, with a temporary contract "for foreigners", but he had to move between several places beforehand. Although his spoken Italian is rather fluent, he attends a course to improve his written one

Gamel is 35 and was born in Alexandria. After finishing high school, he got a diploma in accountancy, but left Egypt in 1980, mainly for economic reasons and went to the Lebanon. Having left in early 1982 because of the war, he went back to Egypt for another year and then came to Milan in 1983, where he already had some friends, to look for a job but also "to see what things were like". In Milan he first found a job as loader in a warehouse and then, through some Egyptian friends one as an assistant cook in a restaurant, which he has been doing for the last two years. However two weeks before I interviewed him, the restaurant was sold to some Chinese

people' "who employ only Chinese labour" and so he is unemployed. In terms of housing, he firstly lived in a pension and then moved to a rented flat with some Egyptian friends in area 5. After two years, through an agency, he moved into a single room, in the same area, because the previous flat was too expensive. His knowledge of spoken Italian is sufficient for everyday life, but he also attends the same course to improve it.

Ibrahim is 28 and comes from Cairo. There he obtained a university bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering but, like many other Egyptians, in 1982 he decided to migrate because of economic reasons "as the salary one gets in Egypt allows bare survival and makes it very hard to plan marriage" and because of social ones, i.e. the greater life opportunities one can find in "a technologically advanced country like Italy". He also chose Italy because of the geographical vicinity and relative ease of entry, but said he would leave if he found a better place. As usual, he firstly found a job as a dishwasher (through some Egyptian friends) and then enhanced his position by becoming a cook, in a restaurant. This allowed him to move from an old casa di ringhiera in area 5, that has quite a high proportion of Egyptian immigrants, to a more modern and comfortable flat in the same area, which he found through an agency, also with a temporary contract for foreigners. He said he chose to remain in the same area because it was quite near his workplace.

Hosni is 31 years old and was born in Cairo, although his parents come from a small village in the northern province of

'Aswan. At Cairo university he obtained a law degree, but in 1979 migrated to Milan, mainly for economic reasons, but also for "social" ones, like in the cases mentioned above. He started working as a dishwasher and then became a waiter, in a pizzeria. He also laments the excessive working week that leaves him very little spare time, but is quite satisfied with his salary, around £400 a month. The first time I interviewed him, he lived in a small rented flat in the western periphery. However when I met him again a few months later, he had moved to a bed and breakfast because his temporary rent contract "for foreigners" was expiring, which also allowed him to save some money, as it was cheaper than the flat.

Abdel is 35 and was born in Cairo, where he attended university to study economics and then worked for some years as an accountant in a bank. His father is a civil servant. His main reason to migrate was an economic one as his earnings were too low, despite his qualified job and migrated to Milan in 1984, where he found a job in a bakery, in the centre of town, through a friend. In the bakery he has to work as many as 64 hours a week (10 hours for 5 days and 14 hours on Saturday) with four other Egyptians, all with no regular contract. He said he would like to migrate to Britain where he could work in a relative's shop, but he has problems with his visa. In terms of housing he also found a single room flat in area 5. Also, due to his relatively recent arrival in Italy, Abdel's Italian is quite poor and so despite his extremely limited spare time, he attends an Italian literacy course.

Four Egyptians not working in the catering sector may be briefly mentioned. The first three, Ahmed, Hassan and Mahmoud, work respectively as a builder, carpenter and car repairer and all live in area 5 in case di ringhiera, where also Ibrahim firstly lived. The first two of them came from Cairo while the last one from a small town of upper Egypt and all of them migrated for the mix of socioeconomic reasons mentioned before 4-5 years ago and say they will eventually go back to Egypt. The fourth Egyptian of this group, Magdi, also comes from upper Egypt, but has studied in university, and migrated because of insufficient income, lack of perspectives, etc. in 1982. He first found a place in the same area, but then moved to the northeastern periphery to a small unheated room. After having worked as a decorator and having attended Milan's faculty of Political Science part-time, he is unemployed since the end of 1984, although finds some occasional jobs.

Married Egyptians (not with Italian women) working in the lower tertiary sector

This category is singled out mainly on criteria that are social and cultural (which will be discussed in the next chapter). This group includes Egyptian men whose family is still residing in Egypt, Egyptian men residing with their spouse in Milan (a very small group for reasons stated above, none of whom I have encountered with this form of employment), and Egyptian men who have married non-Egyptian and non-Italian women. Including all three sub-groups, this category of immigrants accounts for probably 20% of the

Egyptian of family groups. It is more likely that those who are married with Egyptian women have done so in Egypt rather than in Milan, as very few marriages between Egyptians take place in Milan, as will be outlined in chapters 5 and 7.

Mustafa' is 45 years old and comes from Alexandria. There he got married and had four children. In 1980 he came by chance to Italy at a time when Egyptian migrants were still quite few and managed to find a job as a waiter in one of Milan's most prestigious restaurants. Since the job was quite remunerative he managed not only to send remittances to Egypt, supporting his whole family, but even to buy himself a flat, albeit small and in an old building, quite near to the city centre. As the flat is too small he cannot call all his family to live with him but, during the summer holidays, either he goes to visit his family in Egypt, or his wife and children come to visit him in Milan. In 1984 he was joined by his eldest son, Hassan, who was aged 15 and had started the first year of high school in Alexandria, and attended for a brief period an apprenticeship course, but then went back to Alexandria to finish his school.

Abdel is 28 and was born in a medium-sized town of the Nile delta. He came to Italy in 1979 and found a job in a pizzeria as a dishwasher and then "moved up" to become first a waiter and then a cook. Meanwhile he got married to a woman from El Salvador (another quite substantial immigrant group, cf. Table 4.1) and had a daughter by her. The family lived in a small rented flat near the city centre but, as they had no contract they were evicted two weeks before I interviewed

them. They went to live temporarily with friends, but not together. They have been advised by a judge that if they cannot find housing for themselves and their little daughter, she will have to be adopted by another family. Normally this would have led to a suspension of the eviction, but nothing can be done since they have no contract. Although Abdel has some capital, he has not been able to find rented accommodation, neither in the private nor in the public sector, given the great scarcity of this resource.

Egyptians with "higher" forms of occupation

Probably around 10% of the working i.e. male, Egyptian population, works in forms of occupation that are of higher status and more remunerative than the usual employments in the lower tertiary sector. In this category there are businessmen, import-export entrepreneurs, owners of Arabic-Italian translation offices, other forms of entrepreneurship. Probably also in this group the majority of its members are single, even if the higher status and income may make the percentage of married men slightly higher than for the previous group.

Ismail is 34 and was born in El Mansura, a medium-sized town of the Nile delta. He has a degree in physical education and says he came to Italy to get a specialization in physiotherapy. When he arrived in Milan in 1979, he went to stay in the house of an old lady (Italian), meanwhile studying physiotherapy and doing casual jobs, especially as a cleaner. After he obtained his diploma he opened a physiotherapy studio with two Italian course mates. The

studio, looked very modern and was undergoing some restoration and enlargement works, sign that there was enough capital to invest for such improvements. When he felt he had enough money and could afford to buy small flat he was joined by his wife from Egypt, by whom he had a son.

Egyptian men married to Italian women

Probably around 10% of the male population in reproductive age is in this situation. In 1985 as many as 28 marriages occurred between Egyptian men and Italian women, by far the greatest group of intermarriages. Being married to an Italian citizen obviously gives great advantages in terms of access to employment and housing, even if it does not mean an automatic change of class position.

Zayed is 33 and also comes from El Mansura, actually being Ismail's brother in law. He came to Italy in 1981 with a substantial amount of money (around £1,500, he says) and went to stay with his brother in law, at the old lady's place, also doing casual jobs in the cleaning sector. He justifies his choice to migrate more in terms of the quality of life ("it's easier to find here the things you want than in Egypt") and life experience ("I came to see what thing were like") than in strictly monetary terms. After two years he married an Italian divorced woman, older than him, with a son from the first marriage already 18 years old. Zayed went to live in her lower-middle class apartment in area B, with a controlled "fair rent" and found a job as a semi-skilled worker in a small factory.

4.6 Conclusion

Eritreans and Egyptians present rather different demographic patterns. The former is only slightly larger than most other migrant groups in Milan, has a relatively balanced sex-ratio (with a slight female predominance) and differentiated age-structure. This allows for the existence of many family units, even if women-headed households are very common. By contrast the Egyptian group is the largest migrant group in Milan, has a very strong male predominance and a very homogeneous age-structure (around the central working age). Family units are not common. These patterns affect social relations of ethnic solidarity, identity and rates of endogamous marriage that will be examined in the next chapter. While Eritreans migrated mainly because of a war and chose Italy because of historical links, Egyptians migrated for a mixture of economic and social reasons and chose Italy for opportunistic reasons.

From the point of view of employment, both groups are concentrated in the "unprotected" tertiary sector, but while for Eritreans the main avenue of employment is female domestic labour, for Egyptians it is the catering sector. This difference might help to explain one of the main "structural" difference between the two groups, namely the much higher percentage of "legal" migrants among the Eritreans, but it is also linked to issues of ethnic politics analyzed in chapter 7. Finally another major difference between the two groups is the high percentage of Eritreans

living in squats or public housing, which will also be analyzed in chapter 7.

The next chapter examines more qualitative issues concerning the two groups, such as identity, solidarity, ethnic institutions and marriage.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

(1) These aspects would be called by Hannerz "role discriminatory attributes", in that they constrain the repertoire of roles that an individual can carry out in the various role domains (cf. Hannerz 1980, pp.151-156).

(2) Personal communication from the authors.

(3) As Eritrea is formally part of the Ethiopian state, its inhabitants, holding an Ethiopian passport, are classified as "Ethiopians" in official statistics even if the great majority of them really come from Eritrea. When therefore in the text the name "Ethiopia" appears (in inverted commas), usually in the context of some official classification, it refers to a mainly Eritrean population, unless otherwise specified.

(4) In 1985 the situation changed, as the Municipality changed its requirements to conform with those of the police.

(5) Reported in Melotti et al. (1985, pp.43, 89).

(6) Cf. ibid. pp. 79-80, where Leila Ziglio puts forward the same suggestion for the Eritrean group.

(7) The number is given by the difference between the 1983 and the 1984 figures, that is 61, plus those born in 1984. This has been confirmed by an official of the relevant department of the Municipality and is reported in ibid., p. 114.

(8) Cf. for instance the Hausa traders in Ibadan or the City of London businessmen (Cohen, 1969 and 1974) mentioned in chapter 1.

(9) Thus a survey on 57 Eritreans attending a Municipality run literacy course in 1983, showed 26% living with their employers, 31% in case occupate, 21% in rented flats, 5% in religious institutes and 10% with other forms of tenure, even if the sample might be a little unbalanced given the higher proportion of women (mostly illiterate) and the lower proportion of young children than normal. It also records that, considering the first accommodation after arrival, the percentage of those living with their employers was 35%. (Favaro 1983, personal elaborations).

(10) Research carried out in 1983 (Giori 1983) concluded that up to 50% of the hostel's 600 guest were Egyptians, while in 1984 because of stricter enforcement of the regulation requesting the sojourn permit the number dropped down to 25%, as an official working there told me.

(11) Casa di ringhiera literally means "railings house" and is used to describe some 19th century low status housing in Milan, characterized by a terraced gallery, with railings on each floor and a communal toilet at the end of it. Many of these houses are to be found in area 5 in which, as it is being outlined, quite a few Egyptians live.

(12) Association of Italian Christian Workers (cf. chapter 6).

(13) This process is examined in greater detail in chapters 6 and 7.

(14) The story of Abraham, like that of other boys mentioned in this chapter will be taken up in later chapters.

(15) As witnessed by the authorizations issued by the relevant Municipality department for the Christmas fair in piazza Duomo 1984.

CHAPTER 5: ETHNIC IDENTITY, INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATION

This chapter examines how and to what extent the ethnic identity of Eritreans and Egyptians is experienced by the migrants in Milan and the extent it is realized in "ethnic institutions" and social organization. Although the content and significance of identity in the Italian context might be different, the relatively recent character of migration might mean that a radical identity change is not to be expected. "Ethnic institutions" can be defined as groups of people (smaller than the whole ethnic group), gathering for some common purpose (e.g. drinking or religious ceremonies) with the intended or unintended consequence of furthering socialization and group identity as well as collective action, usually taking place in some defined common place. These "ethnic institutions" can be formal, i.e. have some defined organizational body with some planned activities (that may be called "ethnic events") like a church or an holy place, or they can be "informal", lacking the above elements and usually having an intended purpose further removed from the social effects mentioned above, like a bar or a restaurant.

"Ethnic organization" may be defined as an organization attempting to reach all members of the group, with a structure of legitimate authority and decision making, providing the basis for a group-wide collective action with the intended or unintended consequences on the one hand of strengthening the group's sociocultural cohesion and on the

other of articulating the group's struggle for political and economic power or "usurpation". The greater the relative importance of informal ethnic institutions, formal ethnic institutions and ethnic organization, the greater the degree of ethnicity, that in turn will also be affected by the character of the socioeconomic and sociopolitical relations with the wider society and by the internal "structural" factors described in the previous chapter. The content and form of all this, on the other hand, will be linked to the kind of ethnic identity shared by the group, that for recent immigrants is likely to be closely related to that prevalent in the country of origin, but that can undergo adaptations or even transformations in the new context. In summary this chapter compares the different content and strength of the ethnic identity of the two groups, the activities of and attendance at ethnic institutions and the presence of ethnic organization, interaction and solidarity. These features will in part be affected by the character of identity of the countries of origin examined in chapter 2 and in part by the demographic features examined in the previous chapter. In turn they will affect the possibility of collective action and be related to the character of ethnic politics that will be analyzed in chapters 6 and 7. It will also be useful to assess the character of the identity of the two groups in order to compare it with the identity they present vis a vis the "host society", analyzed in chapter 7.

5.1 Eritrean ethnic institutions and ethnic events

Chapter 3 has argued that the two "poles" of Eritrean identity revolve around the nationalist struggle with Ethiopia on the one hand and, at least for 50% of Eritrea's inhabitants and for almost all the migrants in Milan, Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity. The "formal" institutions" will first be analyzed since most "informal" ones are linked to them.

Father Yohannes' Eritrean church

Given that Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity represents the most profound expression of the identity of the Abyssinians (see Ullendorff 1973, pp. 93-105) of which highland Tigrinya-speaking Eritreans are also part, it is quite surprising that there is not an Ethiopic Orthodox church in Milan. There is however an Eritrean priest (1), Father Yohannes, who says mass in a Roman Catholic church, although according to the Ethiopic Orthodox ritual. This is possible since in the 19th century the Roman Catholic Church established a "Catholic Church of Ethiopian rite" preserving much that is of particular significance or national pride in Abyssinian Christianity (ibid., p.110). In spite of this, the vast majority of Abyssinians, including Tigrinya-speaking highland Eritreans, remained loyal to the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, numbering several millions, while Roman Catholics are only about 30,000 among the "Abyssinians" (ibid. p. 110) and some among the Eritrean Bilen.

The overwhelming majority of the 2,500 or so Milanese

Eritreans, coming from the Tigrinya-speaking region, are Ethiopic Orthodox and many of their women even have its symbol tattooed on their flesh (i.e. the coptic cross on their forehead). Although Father Yohannes' church follows in part the Ethiopic Orthodox ritual and celebrates some of its festivals, thereby allowing Eritreans to preserve part of their religious identity, the fact that they do not have an Ethiopic Orthodox church is significant. The reasons for this will be examined in chapter 7. Here only a few characteristics and events of this ethnic institution will be outlined. Father Yohannes' church offers several facilities, part of which are derived from the fact of being within the Catholic Church: mass is said in a spacious church every Sunday and on most major religious festivals according to the Ethiopic calendar. In the back of the church and in a nearby hall, where festivals with "ethnic" food and music are organized after these festivities. In the same premises there is also an "Ethiopian-Eritrean Solidarity Centre" where Father Yohannes gives advice to the dozens of people, mostly Eritrean women, who queue every day to talk to him seeking his advice not only on religious and family questions, but also on questions relating to employment, housing or sojourn permits and visas (Father Yohannes often acts as guarantor for the immigration of Eritreans). He also runs religion and school revision classes for young boys who also have their Youth Centre in the same premises.

Among the main religious festivities which are celebrated, besides the Sunday masses, the main religious holidays are Hacesh Amat (Ethiopic New Year), Christmas, and Easter

according to the Orthodox calendar. When these festivities fall on a working day, they are usually postponed to the next Sunday, as hardly any Eritrean could afford to take a day off for them. The functions are mostly in Tigrinya with a few formulas recited in Geez and some of the rituals, like carrying the cross around the church in the middle of the mass, which are Ethiopic Orthodox. Traditional psalms and songs, often accompanied by drums played by the women, are sung. Samuel's (cf. chapter 4) remark on the functions and rituals was "it isn't the same we have at home (referring to the Orthodox rituals), but at least it is something". The Youth Centre, that also includes an Italian nun, sister Cesira, among its "staff" provides recreational facilities for mainly teenage Eritreans (cf. chapter 8), like bar football, table tennis set and some electric musical equipment and organizes an Eritrean youth football team called Milanafrica.

Father Yohannes was born in Asmara 35 years ago, from a Catholic family, even if from a Tigrinya-speaking area. In his early twenties he entered the order of Cappuccini friars and was sent to a church in a village near Asmara, with some Italian friars. In 1975, after Haile Selassie's overthrow and the worsening of the Ethiopian-Eritrean struggle, many wounded people among whom were some guerrilla fighters came to seek refuge at the church and Father Yohannes, as an Eritrean, supportive of the nationalist struggle even if against violence, did not deny them assistance. He was denounced to the Ethiopian military authorities and

soldiers came to look for him. Luckily he was advised of this beforehand and managed to escape to the Sudan where he stayed for two years in a refugee camp. Later he was sent for one year to London to learn English. In 1979 the Order decided to send him to Milan, where there was already a small Eritrean community and the Capuccini friars of the church, where he now serves, had already established a small assistance centre for Eritreans on which he then worked hard to improve its services also in the face of the growing number of Eritrean immigrants arriving. Although Father Yohannes recognized that the vast majority of "Abyssinians" (which he thought was the most appropriate term defining the semitic language-speaking highlanders) follow the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, he tried to "play down" the differences with Catholicism and said that Eritreans primarily identify as Christians. Therefore Father Yohannes is one of the most charismatic leaders of the Eritrean community, but also, as it will be seen in chapter 7, a powerful "ethnic broker".

The Front

The second main "identity pole" of the Eritreans is the nationalist liberation struggle against Ethiopia which is identified as "colonial oppressor". Both in Eritrea and in Milan, the main liberation front is the EPLF, with a radical-nationalist ideology, also trying to overcome the religious, linguistic and cultural differences in Eritrea. However the overwhelming majority of Eritreans in Milan are from the Tigrinya-speaking Christian highlands. Muslim Eritreans are less than 5%, since they are more likely to migrate to the Arab states. This was confirmed by Habib, an

EPLF activist, who was the only Tigre Eritrean (usually Muslims) I met in Milan.

In Milan both fronts have their delegations with representatives, but the EPLF has by far the most numerous and organized delegation, with different sections, and by far the greatest authority over the Milanese Eritrean community, second only (perhaps) to that of Father Yohannes. The organizational structure of the EPLF, which includes a Political Committee and the mass organizations (women, peasants, workers and students) (3), has some important sections in Italy. While there is a political office in Rome dealing with political affairs at the Italian level, in Arese, a small town some ten miles north-east of Milan, there are the headquarters of the mass organizations for the whole Eritrean diaspora (excluding peasants). The Rome office issues a monthly bulletin called "Eritrean Information" (both in English and Italian), while the Arese one issues papers on selected topics, e.g. on the question of female emancipation in Eritrea. In Milan itself there is an office representing the mass organizations at the Italian level. The aim of these offices is to give political guidance and to coordinate and assist the Eritrean mass movements they represent. Several people, including women, work for the offices in Arese and Milan, but the representatives who have the greatest importance also in the social life of the Milanese community are Tedros, secretary of the union of Eritrean students in Europe (based in Arese) and Tekle, Tesfai and Ghermai, leaders of the mass organizations at the Italian level (based in Milan). The ELF and the TPLF (Tigray

People's Liberation Front) have also small representations in Milan, the leader of the former being a man called Wolde.

Besides the more strictly political activities, the Front (4) carries out some that have an important influence on the social life of the community in Milan and in Italy. About four times a year it organizes festivals with Eritrean bands, usually linked to the Front, that play the traditional music, while people dance, talk or eat "ethnic" food. Once every year, in August, the Front organizes in Bologna a one week general congress with a festival, political speeches by high ranking officials, music and food, attended by Eritreans from Italy and many other countries. In Milan itself it also organizes Tigrinya literacy courses within a Municipality-run literacy course for foreign migrants (cf. chapter 6). Moreover, it is also involved in the Italian Solidarity Committee with the Eritrean people, by which it is openly supported, made up by people some of whom have links with political parties or organizations, especially of progressive or progressive-Catholic orientation. (cf. chapter 7). In conjunction with the Solidarity Committee it also organizes events such as demonstrations, concerts or theatrical representations with famous Italian artists, to spread "the Eritrean cause" among the Italian population.

At the Milanese level, besides their tasks directly related to internal Front activities, Tedros usually organizes politically the events aimed also at the Italian society, giving the political speeches within them, while Tekle, with the help of Tesfai and Ghermai, organizes the events aimed at

the Eritrean community and teaches Tigrinya in the course mentioned above. They also give advice on various matters, usually relating to employment or housing rights, to the members of the community who come to seek it. However, although Tekle's status within the EPLF is lower than Tedros', his role at the level of the Milanese community is perhaps more important since he is more involved in its day to day affairs. Tedros has a degree in economics and Tekle in engineering, both from Milan's university. Wolde, the ELF leader, also has a degree in economics and is involved in communal affairs, but his organization hardly carries out any activity at all in Milan. As Abraham once put it: "the Eritrean people in Milan follow Tekle's advice and initiatives only after those of Father Yohannes and certainly before those of Wolde". All Front-organized activities are nationalist, political or cultural in character and leave aside religion. The role of both Father Yohannes and of Tedros and Tekle, within their respective "institutions", not only as leaders of the Eritrean but also as "brokers" between it and the "host" society, will be analyzed in chapter 7 and explains to a large extent Abraham's remark mentioned above.

Restaurants and bars

Besides these "formal ethnic institutions" with their leaders, there are also "informal" ones, like restaurants and bars. There are three restaurants and one bar that are Eritrean-owned, all of them concentrated in area 3. The biggest of the restaurants, called Eritrea, is run by people close to the EPLF. Another one, called Salomon, is

independently run by an Eritrean and the third one, called Keren, is run by a couple in which the husband is an Amhara Ethiopian and the wife is Eritrean. All three restaurants serve exclusively Eritrean food and are aimed primarily at Eritrean customers, although occasionally also Italian people go and eat there. In the bar they usually play bocchette, a kind of boules game, played on a pool table. The main highland national dish, with a few variations also common to Amhara Ethiopians, is called zigni, consisting of a pancake made of millett stew. The important role of such "ethnic" bars and restaurants for socialization and interaction has been noted for other Ethiopian minority migrant groups in Addis Ababa by Shack (1976). In Milan these "informal" institutions also reflect some broader subdivisions in the community, e.g. one might expect that in the Eritrea restaurant the majority of the customers would be people directly linked to the Front or in the Keren restaurant non-nationalist Eritreans or Ethiopians. The degree to which participation by sub-sections of the Eritrean community to these informal institutions and a fortiori to the "formal" ones is segregated as opposed to fluid, is an important indicator of the degree to which a common cultural identity that might form the basis for collective cultural and political action (i.e. "ethnicity") is shared by the members of the group. This will be analyzed in the next section.

5.2 Eritrean participation at ethnic events and institutions

This section will demonstrate that Eritreans have a high attendance at their ethnic institutions, unlike the Egyptians described later in this chapter.

Participation at the church and religious identity

The Sunday mass in Tigrinya, said by Father Yohannes following the Ethiopic ritual, attracts on average between 60 and 80 Eritreans, mainly middle aged women, who tend to be the most religious section of the community. This routine religious event however, is not perceived as the most fundamental one from the point of view of group solidarity and many people who live far away go their local church and come to Father Yohannes' very rarely. But on the main religious festivals when the service lasts for more than two hours, around 400 people fill up Father Yohannes' church. During the service a group of singers accompanied by drums sing the traditional psalms along with the priests. Nearly all the women and some men wear the traditional white dresses. After the mass everybody gathers in the reception hall behind the church where zigni and wine is provided for everybody and a small band plays traditional Eritrean tunes. Dance is very important too and many people participate in the traditional circular dance in which they tie themselves one with another stressing even more the "mutual binding" of the various individuals of the community. It is a very important occasion for socialization too as different members of the community are brought together. For new immigrants it

is also an occasion in which they sometimes meet friends or acquaintances they knew from their hometown.

Most of the Eritrean individuals and families mentioned in the previous chapter attend these events. Both Abraham's mother and Yonas' mother and, to a lesser extent, the children themselves and the latter's father, are quite religious and always attend the major holidays while the women often also attend the Sunday mass, as they live in the area. I have seen Trahs, Amleset and Berkti, Samuel Woldeghiorghis and his family and Bereket all coming to the main religious events. Others, like Lete and Lemlem stated that they usually go. This also applies to the vast majority, again mostly women, of the people I briefly interviewed who nearly always report that they go to Father Yohannes' church at least once a year for some religious event and other times to seek his advice. Everyone makes remarks like "he's a great man", or "he's our greatest help". These remarks can be explained not only in terms of his spiritual role of priest, but also of his role as "ethnic broker" that will be analyzed in chapter 7. What is also very interesting is the fact that quite often some of the Front leaders, also attend the feast after the religious service. For instance after the Christmas mass (1985) Tekle and Tesfai attended the following party, saying it was as a sign of the unity of the community, even if they had not attended the religious service itself. Moreover some people primarily involved with the Front, attend these religious ceremonies, and conversely some people that are more church goers than Front activists, attend Front-organized events. The reasons

for this will be evident when examining the Eritrean ethnic organization.

However the religious identity pole linked to Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity is not only expressed in these "public" social events, but also in the private domain. Many of the middle aged people do not eat pork which the Ethiopic Orthodox Church forbids. For example, Amleset, working as a maid for some acquaintances of mine, refused to eat pork, but few of the young generations uphold this precept. Nonetheless I saw Abraham singing some traditional Ethiopic Orthodox psalms and prayers, some of which even in ancient Geez, sometimes followed by Yonas and Berhane. The book from which he sang was published in Asmara by the Ethiopic Orthodox Church and had been given to him as a present by Father Yohannes, a sign that also for him the links with Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity were still quite strong. Another interesting element is the consciousness of the Judaic and semitic aspects of their cultural and religious identity. Some of the more educated adults are aware of the many striking similarities that Tigrinya language shares with Hebrew, especially, but not exclusively, in the religious domain (5).

For example Samuel was not only aware of the many linguistic similarities, but also saw his cultural identity as being to a great extent a Judaic-Semitic one, linking it to the common descent Christian and Falasha Abyssinians claim from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and to the many other practices and rituals they have in common (cf. chapter 3). He

stressed the historical, cultural and emotional links between Abyssinians and Jews (going so far as to state that in 1967 and 1973 in their families they prayed for the victory of Israel). This may be a result not only of these cultural links between Abyssinians and Judaism, but also of the fear of the former, especially in highland Eritrea, to be encroached by the Muslim world. For example an EPLF activist called Patria, confirmed the importance of Judaic practices and rituals in highland Eritrea (his grandmother would not cook on Saturday) and of the spiritual links felt with Israel, explaining it with the fact that Abyssinia has always been an island surrounded by Islamic or animistic countries. Other Eritreans have also expressed these views. However, the official position of the Front on these matters is different, as will be seen below. Samuel also stated that the Tigrinya-speaking people are more the "true" bearers of the Abyssinian cultural heritage than the Amharas linguistically and historically as it is the area of the old Axumite empire). For this reason he sees a problem in the fact the border between Eritrea and Tigray cuts across a people with the same language, cultural tradition and religion.

It can be concluded from the above anecdotes that Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity, with all its Judaic components, is still to a large extent followed and practiced by a large part of the Eritreans, both in the private domain and in Father Yohannes' church, albeit in a reduced version because of the fact that he is in the Catholic Church. However it will be seen below that the Front's position is rather different and in chapter 7 that, from a religious

point of view, the Eritreans present a different image to the "host society".

Participation in the Front and political identity

In the "National Democratic Programme" (in Firebrace and Holland 1984), the EPLF refers to zionism as one of the main "enemies of the Eritrean Revolution", after Ethiopian colonialism and imperialism. Privately, various Front leaders in Milan tended to play down the Judaic elements of the cultural-religious identity of highland Eritreans mentioned above. There are both internal and international reasons for this. Internally, it was noted in chapter 2 that religion is perceived as a potentially dangerous division, especially between Christian Orthodox and Muslim and that its role is to be played down. This is especially because the former have historically enjoyed a supremacy over the latter. From an international point of view it should be remembered that, especially up to 1985, the Eritrean nationalist movements were supported by the Arab countries while the United States and Israel supported Ethiopia even if with the new Ethiopian radical regime some of the more radical Arab countries (e.g. Libya) have swapped sides. This is also reinforced by the EPLF's identification with Third World revolutionary struggles (6). Finally this attitude might also be explained by the relationship with some progressive Milanese organizations (which often support also the PLO, cf. chapter 7).

The main cultural activities and events organized by the Front in Milan are the linguistic and political education of

the people, and festivals, stressing the Eritreans cultural unity (even if composed of different nationalities) and a radical "Third Worldist" liberation consciousness. As far as the teaching of Tigrinya is concerned (that of Italian will be examined in chapter 6), this mainly concerns illiterate adults, the vast majority of whom are women, and young children mainly Italian-born who tend to lose the usage of Tigrinya as their mother tongue. The former group in 1982-83 was made up of 19 people and in 1985-86 of 34, and the latter one of 40 people in 1985-86. Teaching however does not include only language, but also elements of history and geography stressing the Eritrean national identity and countering the formal education taught under Italian and Ethiopian rule that has always tended to deny it. Education of peasants and women, traditionally the groups among whom illiteracy was most widespread, has always been a priority in the EPLF's effort to create an Eritrean political consciousness also in the liberated areas of Eritrea. This applies also to Milan where illiteracy or loss of usage of Tigrinya, especially among the Italian born generation, is seen as a potential threat to the maintenance of such consciousness and a first stage in the process of assimilation that would mean a diminishing pool of support for the independence cause, given the great number of Eritrean refugees living abroad.

However festivals with music and dance are the main Front-organized events where the national unity of the Eritrean people and of the Milanese community in particular are mostly underlined and dramatized. At least three of such

events are organized yearly at the Milanese level and one in Bologna, at an international (Eritrean) level. The Milanese ones coincide with Italian holidays when foreign workers also do not have to work. The Milanese festivals are usually organized in a large political centre belonging to a leftist Italian political movement (cf. Chapter 7). The centre is quite old, but can easily accommodate the more or less 500 Eritreans that attend the festivals. On New Year's Eve (non-Orthodox) however, as there may be more than 1,000, some of whom even come from Germany for the occasion, a larger place has to be sought. This was a large circus tent in 1984-85. On all occasions large quantities of zigni are prepared and there is always an Eritrean band playing, as music and dance, together with the socialization that goes with it, are the main activities of the evenings. Sometimes Milan based bands play, but by far the most popular band is that of a guitarist called Tekle, who used to live in Milan, but now is based in Germany. Leaders of the Front told me that they favour a shift of Eritrean bands based in different towns both at the Italian and European level as it increases the sense of unity of the people.

In all the festivals the music that is played is the traditional Eritrean one, from various part of the country, again stressing the unity of all "nationalities", sometimes with rock or jazz influences. Large circles of up to 100 dancing people are formed (the type of dance being the same as that performed at Father Yohannes' church). The festivals usually go on until midnight but on New Year's Eve, when more than 1,000 were around at midnight, there were still hundreds

of people at 5 a.m., underlining the extent to which these occasions are felt, also given the fact that the chances of extended recreations are normally few, in the normal working weeks. Music and instruments are also used to convey "national" political messages and symbols, as in the above occasion when Tekle's band was playing with electric guitars that had the shape of Eritrea and of a machine gun, or in Bologna in 1985 when, shortly after the seizing of a small town by the EPLF forces, the lyrics of a traditional tune were changed to fit the occasion. Short political speeches, briefing on the latest development of the situation in Eritrea and calling for unity, are often given by Front leaders or by the singers themselves. Participation at such events reflects to a large extent the composition of the Milanese Eritrean community with women representing the largest group, but also with men, teenagers and children. The vast majority of women that come are the same who also attend Father Yohannes' church, demonstrating that there is no cleavage between the "religious" and "political" sections of the community. For instance both Yonas' and Abraham's mothers often attend them, as well as the children themselves. Also Samuel and Bereket come quite often. Many of these people do not come for the politico-nationalist character of these events, but for the "ethnic" side of it (music, food, socialization) and as part of a "cultural strategy" aiming at collective rewards, analyzed in chapter 7. Some of the people are also lay Front activists.

At one of these festival, in which Tekle was getting married to an Eritrean woman according to the lay Front ritual, I met

Patria, whose sons and wife are fighting with the EPLF in Eritrea. He explained the significance of his name (which means "homeland" in Italian) with the fact that his father wanted to give him a name symbolizing Eritrean unity which did not exist at the time, but more probably it is the result of Italian colonialism. He was brought up in Addis and said that he had always felt an Eritrean inside and was perceived as such and discriminated against by Amhara Ethiopians (cf. Berkti, chapter 4). Now he works for the Front, gathering spare machinery from Italian industries, sending them to the liberated areas of Eritrea. He also held the common view I heard from many different (Eritrean) sources that Eritreans hold about themselves vs. Amhara Ethiopians, i.e. that they are usually brighter, more productive, practically minded and innovative, while the latter are lazier and more bureaucratic and authoritarian minded. These stereotypes largely reflect the social situation in Ethiopia where Amharas are the politically and culturally dominant group controlling the bureaucracy, while Eritreans are reported to be in skilled manual occupations (cf. Shack 1973, Bjerer 1985). This is because Eritrea is the most industrialized part of the country and an important trading centre (which probably had many merchants too). The image of an "industrious community" is one which is also often presented by Eritreans towards the "host society". Another Front activist, Giuseppe, after having been a fighter in the EPLF, now does the same work as Patria for the Front. His father is an Italian who used to live in Eritrea, but abandoned his Eritrean wife long ago. Like other nationalist Eritreans, he stressed that the Eritrean question is a colonial one that encompasses all

"nationalities" within it. In his view (which is the Front's) this does not apply to the region of Tigray which does not have the legal bases for independence, even if it shares cultural and physical characteristics with highland Eritrea.

But the politico-nationalist ideology and organizational strength and support the Front enjoys, is most evident at the Bologna festival. In the past few years more than 2,000 people from the whole Eritrean "diaspora" have participated on each occasion. In August 1985, although the majority of Eritreans present were either from Italy or from Germany (the two largest Eritrean communities in Europe), there were also Eritreans from Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Holland, Great Britain and the USA. There were single adults, families, young men and women and even boys on their own. The camp was large and well organized, situated on a lawn which had been temporarily loaned from the local communist "circle" which owned it. There were at least 60 big tents which could accommodate at least 20 people each. A large camp refectory served both Eritrean and European food. There were also two stands selling "ethnic objects", like books and pamphlets, tapes, T-shirts, etc. All this was organized almost exclusively by the Front, which also established contact with the local authorities (mostly Communist) needed to have the necessary authorizations for the event. The opening speech was given by Sebat, number three of the political bureau of the EPLF, outlining the current political and military situation in Eritrea. Various Italian and foreign guests were invited (cf. chapter 7). Internal political debates and workshops continued for the rest of the week. On the stage of the main

hall, two Eritrean bands, including Tekle's, performed for a couple of hours, but it was at the camp site where the bands alternated playing and the people danced for many hours (ca 9 p.m.-1 a.m. every night) that the feeling of collective togetherness and cohesion was mostly enhanced. I had come to Bologna with Abraham, Yonas (whose family was also there) and Berhane. At the event there were also Ethiopians who, although obviously not interested in the nationalist side of the event, were there not only for the "ethnic" side of it (the relatively similar cultural features), but also for reasons of "ethnic politics" analyzed in chapter 7. This also applies to some non-nationalist Eritreans whom I also met there.

Attendance at restaurants and bars

It has so far been argued that, although the two main Eritrean ethnic institutions expound very different ideologies, most Eritreans attend both of them. This can be seen also by looking at "informal" institutions, i.e. restaurants and bars, which only to an extent form more "neutral" bases of interaction for the members of the various sections of the community. All of them serve only Eritrean food and have few Italian customers. The largest and most important restaurant, called Eritrea, is linked to the Front. However, even if there are many Front activists who go and eat there, like Tedros, Tekle and Tesfai, the vast majority of Eritreans who go and eat there are "commoners" who may also go to Father Yohannes' church. Indeed it is difficult to find any Eritrean in Milan who has not been there more than once. All the people I interviewed did so

more than once and almost every evening there are more than 20 people (but many more on Saturdays) at the restaurant.

The other two restaurants are much smaller in size and cater for fewer customers. One of them, Salomon's, is run by an "independent" Eritrean (i.e. not linked to the Front), also serves only Eritrean food. Customers are considerably fewer than those of Eritrea. The other "independent" restaurant, Keren, is very interesting because the couple that owns it is made up by an Amhara Ethiopian husband, Teferi and a Tigrinya wife, Haddas. They serve Eritrean food, but also with Ethiopian variants. It might therefore be expected that the customers of this restaurant would be either the few Ethiopians in Milan or Eritreans who identify themselves as Ethiopians. Indeed some Amhara Ethiopians went there, including two half Italians (by father) - half Amhara Ethiopians (by mother), one of them called Roberto, and a young woman that was introduced to me as a "pure Amhara". However the majority of the clients are still Eritreans, as a young man from Asmara, called Simon and one from Keren, called Tolde. Tolde was quite friendly with some of the Ethiopians, yet he still favoured Eritrean independence. More importantly there was a notice in Tigrinya issued by the Front, calling Eritrean workers to attend a Front-organized demonstration in Rome and I have seen some of the above people, including Roberto, Simon and Tolde, at a Front-organized festival in the "usual" centre, in March 1986. Finally, a few yards away, there was also an Eritrean-run bar, attended most evenings by about a dozen Eritrean men, playing boccette, some of whom I have also seen

at the above festivals. While the Eritrea restaurant's profits go, at least partly, to the Front, the other two restaurants and the bar besides being "informal ethnic institutions" can also be interpreted as examples of "ethnic enterprise". All these restaurants and the bars are situated in the same area and the vast majority of Eritreans who want to go out in the evening to drink or to eat, would go to one of these places.

This section has examined the activities of and participation at Eritrean ethnic institutions, arguing that, although there is a great ideological difference between Father Yohannes' church and the Front, attendance at both of them was not segregated from the majority of Milanese Eritreans. Moreover, quite a few people not identifying themselves with either of them, still participate in their activities. The next section will analyze organizations, activities and identity at a wider group level.

5.3 Eritrean "ethnic" solidarity, consciousness and organization

This section shows that also in terms of solidarity network, ethnic consciousness and organization, the Eritrean group is a very cohesive one, unlike the Egyptians analyzed below.

Eritrean ethnic solidarity

Eritreans always say that obligations of mutual help are deeply felt by everyone. This happened, for example, when Abraham's mother, Ruth, was taken to hospital suffering from a kidney disease. At the time she was the only source of income of the family as Abraham was studying (cf. chapter B) and the savings were running out quickly. However Abraham said he did not have any problems because several times a week an Eritrean man or woman would do the shopping at the supermarket for him. Visiting Ruth in the hospital, I once saw at least twenty different (Eritrean) people, mostly women, visiting her. As Abraham wished to go on holiday for one week, an old woman, who is quite an influential character in the community, especially in Father Yohannes' centre, said: "You can go with Abraham on holiday: his mother is not going to be left alone". It is interesting to note that although Ruth has lived for many years in Asmara, she is really a Tigrean and therefore an Ethiopian, although sharing the same language and religion with the Eritreans in Milan (7). Her case thus shows that Eritrean group solidarity can work also for Ethiopians, provided they can be perceived as Eritreans by their sociocultural behaviour and they identify themselves as such. It also helps to explain, why non-Eritrean Ethiopians attend Eritrean ethnic events.

This group solidarity works also at the level of socialization. One evening I went for dinner at a friend of Yonas', Daniel, with Yonas and four other (Eritrean) friends. Even though his parents were expecting only two guests instead of six, they welcomed everyone and after ten minutes

a huge communal plate of zigni and beer were served. When I asked Daniel's mother if she had been shocked by the arrival of so many unexpected guests, she replied: "Why? If there is enough food for everyone, everyone can eat, if there is little food, we share and if there is not enough food we laugh, joke and have a good time." Although this principle works all the time, it should also be noted that that day, according to the Ethiopian calendar, was St. Michael's day, one week before the Orthodox Easter, and a small party was taking place anyhow. Ruth, Yonas' mother as well as other women and a few men were also there. The family lives in a relatively "good" squat, the mother works as a maid and the father is presently unemployed after having worked as a waiter. Another similar occasion was when I was invited by Michael at a party in the honour of the baptism of a young first cousin of his. About twenty Eritreans, including adults and children were there, with food and drinks in great abundance. Although the father works for the Front, he still had his son baptized.

As far as socialization in terms of friendship, "going out", etc., is concerned, the primary and by far the most important contacts for the overwhelming majority of Eritreans are within the group. Virtually all the people I interviewed said the friends they mostly go out with are Eritreans. The primary places of socialization are "formal ethnic institutions" or "informal" ones. The general attitude of Eritreans to intergroup relations, can be summed up by a statement Amleset made to me on the subject: "I am very glad there is a good Eritrean community here in Milan. We are very

attached to each other". From the general discussion of this and the preceding paragraph, it can be deduced that it is sufficient to be identified and to identify oneself as Eritrean, to fall within this primary network of relationships, without any further discrimination, e.g. in terms of class and status, as for instance for the larger Egyptian community.

Rites of passage

Coming back to the two main "ethnic institutions", their importance and the fact that attendance at them is not segregated, is confirmed by an analysis of the main rites of passage, i.e. births and marriages, performed at Father Yohannes' church. This is because the significance of a rite of passage is primarily a sociocultural one of entrance or achievement of a certain stage within the group, not just a strictly religious one. For instance many Jews even if lay or atheist, still have their children circumcized. Their relative importance among minority ethnic groups is probably all the greater since group membership is more challenged. The rate of rites of passage performed in "ethnic institutions" can therefore be a good indication of the degree to which loyalty to the group is felt by its members. Father Yohannes told me that from 1979 to the end of 1985 he baptized 141 Eritrean children. This represents ca. 76% of the estimated number of Eritrean births for the same period, amounting to 186 (8). On top of that many people get their sons circumcized, as Samuel did and another man who got his son circumcized in Eritrea confirmed this, despite the fact

that this practice is probably not approved by Father Yohannes, who after all is in the Catholic Church (9).

As far as marriages are concerned, Father Yohannes told me that in the same period he celebrated 68 weddings among Eritreans. The average of nearly 10 per year is hard to compare with the total number of marriages, including civil ones. However in 1985 I recorded 7 "civil" marriages involving "Ethiopian" citizens celebrated in Milan's municipality. These points will be expanded in chapter 7. No marriage classified as "religious" and involving "Ethiopians", i.e. celebrated by a qualified Catholic priest (10) has been found. It should also be noted that the "civil" marriages registered in the Municipality may or may not have been carried out as well as those celebrated by Father Yohannes, depending on whether the couple wanted their marriage to be recognized by the Eritrean community, by the Italian authorities or both.

Three conclusions might be drawn from the above account. In the first place all religious marriages carried out by Eritreans, in 1985 at least, were celebrated by Father Yohannes. Secondly and more importantly, adding the albeit rather limited number of "lay" marriages celebrated by the Front (ca. 20 from 1980 to 1985, as Tekle told me), the number of marriages celebrated in Eritrean "ethnic" institutions vastly outnumbers that of those in "civil" institutions of the "host" society. The attitude towards marriage can be summed up by a statement made by Samuel on this topic: "I got married by Father Yohannes and I did not

bother marrying also in the Municipality. Why should I when my children can be recognized anyhow? It is much more important for me to be married in the traditional way vis a vis my community than the Italian society." Finally, as very few of the marriages celebrated by Father Yohannes involved "mixed" marriages with Italians (as he told me) and as the marriages recorded in the Municipality for the year 1985 such "mixed" marriages were negligible, the overwhelming majority of the marriages are endogamous ones. In this respect, Tedros told me that at the 1984 Bologna festival there was a heated debate on whether or not people agreed to such out-marriages, with the vast majority of the adult population opposing it. It will be seen that the situation is very different for the Egyptians.

Ethnic consciousness and organization

Besides this "ethnic" solidarity and identification there is also a high degree of "ethnic" consciousness and pride, that also have an impact on how "outsiders", and in particular Italian ones, are perceived and accepted. The first time I attended an Eritrean festival at the political centre mentioned before, someone at the door enquired who had invited me to the festival. When I answered "Giulia", an important Italian activist of the Solidarity Committee for Eritrea (cf. chapter 7), they let me in immediately. He added: "Giulia is a member ad honorem of our community." It was only after several months acquaintance that either Tekle or Father Yohannes told me "you are always welcome in our community." This shows that the Eritreans perceive themselves as a community of which strangers, only after their

reliability has been tested, can become members, but only ad honorem. It also shows Father Yohannes' and Tekle's roles as "gatekeepers" of the Eritrean community, a point which will be expanded in chapter 7.

Moreover on one of the first times I attended a festival at Father Yohannes' church, someone told me: "we accept strangers at our festivals, if they know how to behave." To my question about what he meant by "behave", he replied: "for instance you don't have to say things like: I like Negroes very much..." showing an awareness of the ethnic paternalism that so often conceals racism. On another occasion my moral position as researcher vis a vis the "researched" was questioned. Once Samuel asked me: "Is your commitment for the Eritrean cause going to end with the end of your research? I hope you won't behave like a certain journalist who earned his reputation writing about us and then let us down." Finally, Eritreans always appreciate if an outsider knows at least a little of their culture and/or language, i.e. Tigrinya. If I would greet a person I knew in Tigrinya, other people around, especially middle age women, would smile and nod their head in assent remarking: "what a good boy!"

Given the high degree of attendance of Eritreans at both major ethnic institutions and the importance of "ethnic" solidarity and consciousness, it is not surprising that the Eritreans should have formalized the substantial cohesion of their group into a legally recognized (by the Italian authorities) institution called "Eritrean Community: Movement

of Solidarity and Culture (among Eritrean residents in Lombardy)" (11). The Community was formed in the Autumn of 1984 and included in its representative council Father Yohannes, Ghermay (EPLF), Wolde (ELF) and six other "commoners", including one woman. The aims of the Community, contained in its statute, are to recognize that all Eritreans are an integral part of Eritrean society, to preserve and develop Eritrean cultural and civic values and the affective and solidarity ties with the country of origin, to stimulate among the Eritreans the habit of recognizing each other and meeting as many times as possible as well as the highest possible degree of solidarity in fields such as housing, work and culture as well as sport, folklore and music (art. 1, 4, 5)

These aims correspond quite closely to those aspects such as nationalism, the role of cultural identity and the importance of ties of solidarity among the members of the group. It is significant that "all Eritreans resident in Lombardy are by right full members of the Eritrean community ..., without discrimination by race, religious creed or political ideology" and that all Eritreans have the right to make use of the premises of the Community and to participate in activities organized by it (art. 8, 9, 11). The statute also stresses that three of the members of the representative council must be "from a social force in Eritrea" (art. 14). This is fulfilled by the presence of Father Yohannes, Ghermay and Wolde. It is interesting to note that before setting up this Community some Eritreans, including Tedros from the EPLF, have interviewed the chief rabbi of Milan's Jewish

community, to ask him how the Jews are organized to preserve their cultural identity. This again shows the consciousness of Eritreans to preserve their ethnic identity and at the same time the role of the Front leaders (and of Father Yohannes) in this task, the reasons for which will be analyzed in chapter 7.

The combination of religious and ethnonationalist "identity poles", realized in the "ethnic institutions" described above, give the Milanese Eritreans a strong ethnic identity. The degree of ethnic solidarity, consciousness and organization are in part due to the specific character of the identity they carry from their country of origin analyzed in chapter 2, in part to the specific demographic characteristics of the group (small size, balanced sex-ratio) and in part to their "usurpatory cultural strategy" in which Father Yohannes and the Front have a major role as "ethnic brokers" that will be examined in the next two chapters. For example the situation of Eritreans in Rome may be very different, as is that of the Milanese Egyptians that will now be analyzed.

5.4 Egyptian "ethnic" institutions

Chapter 3 outlined how Egyptian identity fluctuated between a fundamentalist view of Islam and a "modernist" or "liberal" one, sometimes with secularist tendencies from a religious point of view, and between pan-Arabism and territorial nationalism, from a nationalist point of view (12). However nowadays there is not an "Egyptian question"

in the same way as there is an Eritrean one. As Islam is not just a religion confined to the sphere of spiritual beliefs, but has great relevance for everyday life behaviour and politics, this section examines the degree to which it is practiced by Egyptians in Milan and their relationship to Milan's only Islamic institution, the Muslim Centre. One of the obvious differences with the Eritreans with respect to religious identity is that while the Eritrean one, although within the larger framework of the "host society's" religious system (i.e. Christianity) is specific to the group (the Ethiopic Orthodox ritual), on the contrary the one that caters for the Egyptians (i.e. Islam) is outside of the "host society's" religious system and caters also for the other Muslim national groups present in Milan (cf. Table 4.1).

The Muslim Centre

Milan's Muslim Centre (13) is situated in a basement in area 10. It has an Imam, who is a Jordanian doctor, called Sherif, about 40 years old, as well as an Italian Muslim leader, about 50 years old, whose Islamic name, by which he wants to be called, is Abubakr. He has a very good knowledge of Arabic and of Islamic religion, is very respected in the Centre and has also an important role as link to the Italian society as the editor of a monthly bulletin in Italian called Il Messaggero dell' Islam, issued by the Centre. Another dozen people are involved in running the Centre, with three or four of them who are Italians, interestingly enough, mostly merchants. Besides its strictly religious functions, organizing services for the five daily prayers and major religious holidays, the Centre has also some cultural and

social ones, like organizing courses on Islam and Arabic both for Muslim Arabs and non-Muslim Italians, social activities like a football team and providing occasional meals and sometimes even a temporary shelter. It also has a small library containing books about Islam and organizes some meetings to present Islam to the Italian public. This Centre is not a Mosque, i.e. a purpose built building with a minaret, etc. But as the only Muslim institution in Milan, one would expect its role among the Egyptians in Milan to be significant. However, as will be seen below, this is not true for most Egyptians.

The leadership of the Centre is linked to the "Muslim Brotherhood". The main features of this sect have already been described in chapter 3. It will be recalled that the Brotherhood professes a very fundamentalist version of Sunni Islam, which entails not only a unity of faith and politico-social action ultimately aiming at an Islamic theocracy, but also a profound role of traditional Islamic values and practices in everyday life. It might be suspected that this form of Islam should not be too suited for the majority Egyptian migrants, for whom the experience of a "western way of life" is one of the motives behind migration (cf. chapter 4). The fact that Milan does not yet have a mosque and the role of the Muslim Centre in trying to get one, are interesting questions which will be examined in chapters 7 and 8. It should be added that in Milan there is also a small Egyptian Coptic community, probably numbering less than a hundred people, with a priest who says mass once every month. Although they seem to interact to a certain

extent with the main body of the Egyptian Muslim population, the small number and consequent difficulty in establishing contacts, have made it difficult to find the necessary data.

Other Egyptian ethnic institutions

Non other "formal" institution concerning, either not specific to the group (but to which Egyptians had an entitlement to membership, e.g. the Centre) or specific to the Egyptian group, has yet emerged. There was also a radio programme in Arabic, broadcast by an independent left wing Milanese station to which many Egyptians listen. However the organizer, called Issam, is a Palestinian and although the programme has mainly a cultural content (Arab music, literature, etc.), its political messages are mainly concerned with the Palestinian question and sometimes with the situation of Arab workers in Italy, but it does not perform the role of organizing them. In terms of "formal ethnic institutions", the lack of group specific ones and the only partial identification open to Egyptians as far as Muslim or Arab ones are concerned, sets a sharp contrast with the Eritrean situation.

In terms of "informal institutions" however, the contrast is less sharp. There are three restaurants that are Egyptian-owned and serve Egyptian food, even if one of them, situated in area 5, an area of relative Egyptian residential concentration (cf. chapter 4), serves also Italian food. One of the other two, called the Sphynx, is situated in area 3, where also Eritrean restaurants and bars are situated, and the other, called Ramses, in area 5, quite near the Muslim

Centre, although as it will be seen below, it is not directly linked to it. Although quite a few Egyptians go and eat in these restaurants every evening, there are definitely more Italian customers there maybe because Arabic food has a "higher" reputation than Eritrean food, but maybe also because these restaurants are meant also for Italian clients, as opposed to Eritrean ones. It can also be noted that the Egyptians have the same number of restaurants as the Eritreans but for a population perhaps four times bigger. Moreover there are, to my knowledge, no Egyptian-owned bars, perhaps because of the Quranic injunction not to drink alcohol even if this does not prevent many Egyptians from doing so. Therefore there are quite a few Italian-owned bars, especially in area 5 where there is some degree of Egyptian residential concentration (cf. chapter 4), where Egyptians often meet to drink and play pool or boccette.

The next section looks at the participation by Egyptian immigrants at these "ethnic" institutions, relating it to the character of Egyptian migration that has been examined in the previous chapter. It will show a very different picture from the the Eritrean one analyzed before.

5.5 Egyptian participation at "ethnic" institutions

Participation at the Muslim Centre and religious identity

Carrying out "participant observation" in the Muslim Centre presented some difficulties. First of all an outsider is seen either as a potential convert or as a dangerous person. After I had been there a few times, Abubakr enquired about the

reasons' for my presence and when I told them I was doing research I was told: "even if you don't look like a spy, your results might be used for wrong purposes even without you being aware of it." In spite of my repeated professions of discretion, it was only when I told them I was a friend of a researcher they trusted, that I was finally accepted. Part of the reason was perhaps that besides my academic interests I told them that I was genuinely also interested in learning about Islam and given the proselytizing ethos of Islam and of the Centre in particular, I started to be seen as a potential convert. This shows not only the Centre's attitude towards outsiders, but also Abubakr's role as its "gatekeeper".

The main religious function which is on Friday around midday lasts for about 40 minutes and consists mainly of recitation of a prayer by the worshippers and of a sermon by the leader of the ceremony (imam), who is nominated from time to time. This function attracts on average between 60 and 80 people and bigger festivals, like that for the birth of the Prophet, between 100 and 200 people. They are on the whole either working class or "radical" Muslim students, rather than wealthy businessmen who, I was told, tend more to go and pray in the various Saudi, Kuwaitian, etc. consulates, probably because of their different status. It might be noted that the equivalent main religious function for the Eritreans, that is the Sunday mass, attracts nearly the same absolute number of people as the Muslim one but for a total population that may be about one tenth of the total Muslim population, which could amount to 25,000 (cf. Table 4.1). This can be partly accounted for by the fact that it is easier in Italy

to find some spare time on Sundays that on Fridays lunchtimes, also given the fact that the Centre is virtually in the periphery of the city. Part of the reason lies also in the Centre's excessively fundamentalist version of Islam that does not meet the average religious view and practice of the majority of Muslim migrants in Milan, and of Egyptians in particular, as will be seen below. The most important explanation in terms of the scarce resources the Centre is able to mobilize for Egyptians, will be analyzed in chapter 7. In fact, in terms of national composition, I had the impression that Egyptians were under-represented at the ceremonies organized by the Centre, but it has to be noted that both the leadership of the Centre as well as the worshippers were extremely reluctant to give any information about nationality given the fact that in that context it was totally unimportant as compared to (Muslim) religion. However, from the little information I was able to get on this question, I found two Jordanians, two Maghrebians, two Palestinians, one Syrian, one Lebanese, one Somali and only a couple of Egyptians, plus three or four Italian-Muslims.

This social and national composition was to a large extent also present in an important two-day festival celebrating the Birth of the Prophet (in December), held by the Centre also in view of what Abubakr had earlier described as a "cultural break" in the presentation of Islam in the face of all the misconceptions surrounding it in western societies. The festival, besides the religious services, included the showing of a film on the life of the Prophet, two lectures on Islamic topics and a buffet with Arab food (mostly

Jordand-Syriac). About a dozen non-Muslim Italians attended the event. During showing of the film about a dozen Muslim women sat at the back, but whenever the lights were on, they immediately disappeared in a separate room, probably also as a show of Islamic faith to the non-Muslim participants. After an opening address by Sherif, the Imam of the Centre, Abubakr gave a lecture on "Islamic values", while professor Suliman gave one on "Islamic art".

The fundamentalist interpretation of Islam is apparent from the Centre's attitude to other religions and in the interpretation of the contemporary world and of history, besides the obvious strictness in the application of Muslim precepts in everyday life. According to Abubakr, there is only one truth in the world, which is Islam of course, and the corollary is that there are no other truths or even half-truths, i.e. other "truthful" religions or ideologies. Western "materialist" ideologies, whether capitalist "consumerism" or marxism, are condemned. In this respect Abubakr is reluctant to talk about his "dark past", when he was involved in the Italian left, "fighting the system", without realizing that by doing that he was still within it, even if the only important thing now is that he is "a servant of Allah." Not only are western or communist societies most obviously remote from the Islamic ideal which would entail justice for all mankind, but so are also all existing Muslim states who are to different degrees "contaminated" by secular ideas. In this respect, even if Israel is considered as occupied Palestine, the PLO is also "sold out" in as much as it is a nationalist and political movement and not a

religious one and is therefore "the lay counterpart of Israel". This typically fundamentalist ideology, stands in sharp contrast to the radical "Third Worldist" ideology expounded by the EPLF, which appeals to various political groups of the Italian left (some of whom also support the PLO).

As far as the Muslim Brotherhood is concerned, although the leadership of the Centre does not conceal some sympathies for it, it never admits allegiance to it as the Brotherhood, being a secret society and moreover with a long record of opposition and oppression, does not allow its members to do so. I discovered that the leadership of the Centre does belong to the Brotherhood only through Issam (the PLO activist) who does not hold good relationships with the Centre. The only person that partly falls outside this clearly defined world view and set of religious beliefs for whom the Centre has some admiration and whose cooperation it actively seeks, is professor Suliman. Of Afghani origin, he is not only a professor of history of art in an Italian university and a psychoanalyst, but also a "Great Master" of a Sufi lodge (14). Abubakr holds professor Suliman in great esteem also because of the intellectual contribution and legitimacy he can bring to his effort to spread Islam in the Milanese society, even if Sufis do not hold, as Abubakr put it, "the belligerent-applicative side of Islam", probably also referring to the jihad (holy war), a belief certainly upheld by the Brotherhood. Sufficient data on the Sufi presence in Milan have not been found, but its strength among Egyptian migrants is probably limited.

Attitudes towards the Centre and identity of Egyptians

As far as the Centre is concerned it might already be deduced from the above discussion that attendance, at least on a regular basis, is very low, but the reasons given for this range from "excessive strictness" in the practice of Islam, to lack of time and too great distance, although it is not always clear what the real motives are. As far as Islam in general is concerned, there are varying degrees of observance. One of the most "extreme" secularists I have met, was Mohammed (15), who said he considers himself a Muslim "only by birth" and therefore does not follow any religious precepts. He knows there is a Muslim Centre in Milan but has never bothered even to find out where it is situated. On the other hand Ahmed and Hassan said they are proud to be Muslim, but that they are not strict in observing Islamic precepts, especially as far as drinking alcohol is concerned. When I asked them if they have ever attended the Muslim Centre, he said: "here in Italy?", as if implying: "this is not what we came for".

Ibrahim is quite religious, prays at home and does not eat pork nor drink alcohol, except on rare occasions when doing this would mean offending an Italian friend. He has been to the Centre only very rarely, but more because of distance and lack of time, than for "ideological" reasons. However he thinks that religion is more an individual matter and what is important is that someone has "a good heart" and believes in God, whether a Muslim, a Christian or a Jew. For this reason he does not see any problems in marrying a non-Muslim woman,

"as long as we love each other and share the same values that Islam, Christianity and Judaism have in common." Also raising children would not constitute a problem as they would grow up in these ideals of goodness and justice and would be able to choose which religion to follow when grown up. This attitude towards children's upbringing was also shared by Abdel who married a woman from El Salvador and has a daughter by her. This set of beliefs and values seems to be in too sharp a contrast with the Islamic fundamentalism expounded by the Centre, to allow for any great identification by Ibrahim with it. This is also true of Abdel who told me he even observes Ramadan (in Italy) but would have no objections to marrying a Catholic Italian girl. Gamel on the other hand is the only Egyptian I interviewed who told me he wants to marry an Egyptian woman, by going back to Egypt, not because of differences in religious beliefs (which he holds very similar to Ibrahim), but because he thinks he can trust more an Egyptian woman whose values he can be more sure of.

This indifferent or negative attitude towards the Muslim Centre and this "liberal" attitude towards Islam, is even more shared by Egyptians of "higher" status. Mustafa', who is married to an Egyptian woman (but it is worth remembering that the marriage took place in Egypt before migration), said his hard work to support his family in Egypt leave him little time for religious ceremonies and he has never been to the Centre. His general attitude towards Islam seems to be the usual "individualistic" one ("religion is a matter of the heart, what is important is what you feel inside...", etc.). Ismail, who is married to an Egyptian woman (but his marriage

also took place in Egypt before migration) told me that although he identifies himself as a Muslim and is going to raise his child in the Muslim faith, he is not too strict in the observance of Islam. On the question of the Centre he said that while at the beginning he has been there a few times to pray, he then gave up because of the "politicization" of the Centre he did not enjoy, probably referring to the fact that it was controlled by the Brotherhood.

It is interesting he should have been the only Egyptian I interviewed who has phrased his reluctance to attend the Centre in this way, because not only does he come from a middle class background, but has been able to maintain this class position in Italy and it is precisely against this class and its supposed secularist "corruption" that much of the Brotherhood's efforts are directed. Moreover the challenge to the legitimacy of Egypt's government as a national state is also not shared by many Egyptians who on the whole do not question the legitimacy of the state representing them. As a member of the Egyptian consulate told me: "Egyptians migrate for economic and not for political reasons, so they have no reason to go to a place where they hear bad things about their country". Zayed, Ismail's brother in law, said he is quite religious and is very proud of the ethical and spiritual values of Islam and Arab culture, but told me he does not go to pray in the Muslim Centre because he does not want to be identified as a Muslim "commoner", especially in the heartland of Christianity: "it would be like going to church at Mecca". The only Egyptian I

interviewed whom I met at the Centre was Magdi, but it is interesting to note that while I have seen him there he was unemployed and, as Issam told me, this can be one reason why some people attend the Centre, as they hope to be able to get some support, besides the fact of having the spare time. However when I met him again in another context and with a part-time occupation, he spoke about the Centre with some distance not showing great identification with it.

Attendance at bars and restaurants

Thus attendance by Egyptians at the Centre is, for various reasons, very limited and the Centre therefore does not perform for them the role of an "ethnic institution" as a place of group socialization and interaction and basis for collective action that, e.g. Father Yohannes' church performs for Eritreans. Other reasons in terms of "ethnic politics" and "cultural strategies" will be outlined in chapter 7. No other "formal ethnic institution" has been found. In terms of "informal" institutions however, the situation is to some extent more similar to that of the Eritreans. Of the three Egyptian-owned restaurants, that which enjoys the largest number of Egyptian customers and has the widest choice of Egyptian food, is Ramses, situated relatively near the Muslim Centre. But as one influential character close to the Egyptian consulate told me, not without contempt, that strip-teases have been held there, one can hardly imagine that it is linked to the Centre. The Sphynx restaurant, situated near the area where also all the Eritrean restaurants are, although indicated to me with approval by the same character, does not have the same number of Egyptian

customers as the Ramses one, also because it is slightly more expensive, and has a fair number of Italian customers. Bars and cafes are more popular as meeting places by the Egyptians. In the couple I attended in area 5, there were on average a dozen Egyptians playing boccette or cards, sometimes mixing with the Italian clients, and sometimes gathering in a different room. The fact that these bars are owned by Italians and therefore are not intended primarily for "ethnic" customers, make them an interesting setting for "ethnic" encounters and relations which will be discussed in chapter 8.

This section concludes that the Egyptian group does not have any "formal ethnic institution" with a leadership that can articulate its socialization and collective action, but still has some degree of in-group interaction in "informal" ethnic institutions. The next section will examine the general pattern of ethnic solidarity, consciousness (including the rate of in-group rites of passage) and organization.

5.6 Egyptian ethnic solidarity, consciousness and organization

Egyptian ethnic solidarity

Egyptians in general do not show the same degree of preference in interacting with "fellow ethnics" as the Eritreans. When questioned about friendship and socialization, although nearly everyone says they have Egyptian friends, they also say equally that they go out with Italian ones. This might not be very accurate, but it is

still interesting that it should be perceived in this way. Many say that people should be considered friends not because they belong to the same group, but on their individual merit, even if most people would admit to have at least three or four good Egyptian friends. Moreover while for Eritreans ties of friendship and solidarity encompass nearly the whole group, for Egyptians the network is much more fragmented, reaching only three or four other persons. There are however even people, like Ismail and Zayed, who told me that on the whole they tended to avoid interacting with other Egyptians, except among themselves as brothers-in-law. In this respect a phrase Mohammed told me was quite illuminating: "among ourselves (i.e. Egyptians) we tend to socialize more on the basis of social class and even geographical origin than anything else. For instance I would never dream to have as a friend a peasant from upper Egypt". This again stands in sharp contrast with the Eritrean remark that "Eritreans always stick together". This relative social segregation based on the perception of different social status seems to have its origins in the profound class divisions and socioeconomic transformation of Egyptian society (cf. chapter 2). Although the majority of Egyptians in Milan come from the educated middle-classes, chapter 4 has shown that new class divisions among Egyptians might be created in Milan, superimposed, albeit in a pyramidal way, on the old ones. This is precisely the case of Ismail and Zayed. In terms of assistance network too, even if in many instances jobs and housing are found through "ethnic" contacts, I also heard complaints about the reliability of the network in cases of difficulty, like from Abdel (the one who married a woman from

El Salvador) who complained that the (Egyptian) friends he had previously helped are now letting him down.

The only events to my knowledge that have brought together quite a few Egyptians as a group, have been a concert and a football tournament. The concert (which unfortunately I could not attend) was given by an Egyptian folk musician and was reported to have attracted nearly one thousand Egyptians, although probably a number of them were from other Arab states, as Egyptian culture (cinema and music) is the most diffused in the Arab world. The football tournament was organized in the past three years by an Italian Catholic group, among all the various national groups present in Milan. The 1985 event had 24 teams from various nations, but Egypt was the only national group which had two teams because of the sheer number of players. In the final the British team won against one of the two Egyptian teams, much to the dismay of the nearly one hundred Egyptian supporters who came to watch the match. The Eritrean team was fifth (after having won the 1983 event). These events were of some importance to the Egyptians as they gave them an opportunity to meet as a group, which they normally lack and many of them turned up. However the opportunities for socialization they provide are only temporary and therefore cannot articulate the group's interests nor provide a stable source of identity as a "formal" ethnic institution.

Rites of passage

The strength of the Egyptian group identity can be measured, to a certain extent by the rate of rites of passage, that

take place in-group and are performed in an "ethnic" institution. Since Egyptians are Muslims, these combined roles can be performed only by the Muslim Centre which can be compared with Father Yohannes' church for the Eritreans, with the difference that the former is not specific to the Egyptians as the latter is to the Eritreans. In this respect it is important to take into account the fact that Egyptians have a more unbalanced sex-ratio than Eritreans. However they still have the options of marrying the ca. 20% female population of the group, to go temporarily to Egypt to find a wife (cf. Gamel, above) or to make the Italian Catholic bride convert to Islam. One could also expect that the fundamentalism of the Centre might prevent Egyptians from marrying there, but for one of the most important events in the life cycle of an individual it could also be possible that allegiance to Islam in general would prevail over "ideological" differences. The significance of these issues will be taken up again in chapter 7.

Looking at the Muslim Centre, the data regarding births and marriages come from the Centre's monthly bulletin. Unfortunately the births and marriages reported do not specify the country of origin of the people involved. However it can be inferred that about half the births and marriages reported will be Egyptians, as they represent about half of the total Milanese Muslim population. In 1984 the number of births amounted to 11 and in 1985 to 17. This is on average less than half of the estimated number of Egyptians born each year in Milan from 1979 to 1983, that is 38 (cf. chapter 4). The proportion falls to about a quarter, taking into account

also the offspring of marriages with Italian women, estimated at around 61. However, accepting that only half of the reported births are actually Egyptian as opposed to Muslim from other countries, the percentage falls to 25% in the first case and to 12.5% in the second one.

This contrasts quite sharply with the Eritrean situation in which up to 76% of the new born babies are baptized by Father Yohannes. Even more striking is the situation of marriages. While for the Eritreans "ethnic" marriages (i.e. in Father Yohannes' church) exceed those celebrated in the Municipality, the total number of marriages celebrated in the Muslim Centre, i.e. 6, both in 1984 and in 1985, is less than 20% of the 34 marriages which took place in the Municipality in 1985, involving at least one Egyptian partner. Assuming that only half of the marriages recorded by the Centre actually involve Egyptians, as opposed to other Muslims, the percentage falls to 10%. Moreover in none of the 34 marriages celebrated in the Municipality were both partners Egyptians. So not only is Islamic marriage not very relevant, but also out-group marriage is the only existing form, at least for the year I have examined. These data can be interpreted as a sign of relatively weak group identity, also given the "individualistic" view of Islam, prevalent among Egyptians (which does not mean they have no identity as it can come from sources other than the group) within a context of a relative "scarcity" of women. These points will be further pursued in chapter 7 and linked to the ethnic politics and cultural strategies of the group.

Egyptian ethnic consciousness and organization

No sign comparable to the significance and pride of "Eritreanness" has been found among Egyptians. On the contrary, social differentiation within the group and the wish to marry an Italian woman are the most significant characteristics of the Egyptian group. Within this context it is not surprising that no organization capable of providing a framework for authority and decision making emerging from the interaction between "ethnic" institutions and the group, like in the Eritrean case, has yet emerged. However in November 1985 a group of Egyptians, mainly made up of relative "upper class" members, some of whom belonging to the Consulate, decided to set up an "Egyptian Community". This decision was quite of the "top-down" kind and took the few "ordinary" Egyptians who found out about it quite by surprise, while the majority was not even aware that it was taking place. The aims of the "Egyptian Community", as taken from its statute, are "to favour the social and cultural development among its members" (art. 1), "to favour cultural and scientific exchanges between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Italian Republic", "develop the sociocultural relationship among the Egyptians resident in Italy" and to "strengthen the ties between Egyptians and their mothercountry, to preserve Egyptian culture, traditions and customs" (points 1, 3 & 4, art 3). Overall the emphasis is more on culture and less on socialization and developing ties of solidarity, as for the Eritreans.

While it is enough to be an Eritrean to qualify for membership to the Community, in the statute of the Egyptian

Community it is stated that an application for membership "must be supported by the signature of two members" and that "the representative council decides admission or refusal without having to justify its decision which will be definitive" (point 1, 2, art. 4). It is obvious that the people who decided to set up the Community want to retain control of it by regulating access to membership. This probably is not so much intended for lower class Egyptians, but for potential "trouble makers" as members of the Muslim Brotherhood could be, also given the fact that the Community is linked to the Egyptian Consulate, as well as Egyptians involved with criminal activities. A member must have a record of "good behaviour and not have been condemned for any offence either by the Italian or by the Egyptian authorities" (point 1, art. 4). On the whole the Egyptian Community seems to have more the functions of a Rotary club for a selected membership, than that of an "ethnic organization" like the Eritrean one. It is therefore not surprising that when I asked Gamel and Abdel what they thought about the birth of the Egyptian Community, they should have remarked: "as they are mainly rich Egyptians, what guarantee is there that they will represent the interests of the 95% of Egyptians working in Milan as waiters and cooks?" Thus, also in terms of ethnic organization, the Egyptian group is less cohesive than the Eritrean one.

5.7 Conclusion

Eritreans and Egyptians present very different pictures concerning their ethnic identity and institutions. Eritrean

identity revolves around two "identity poles", a religious one (Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity) and a nationalist one (Eritrean liberation). These two "poles" are realized in Milan by two "ethnic institutions", Father Yohannes's church and the Front (whose most important leaders are Tekle and Tedros). Eritreans have a high attendance at both institutions (in spite of their ideological differences), both in terms of the events they organize and of rites of passage, which are overwhelmingly endogamous. Finally they have a high degree of ethnic solidarity and consciousness and have managed to establish a group-wide organization representing the various sections of the group and reaching the vast majority of its members. On the contrary Egyptians, mainly holding a "liberal" Muslim identity, have a very low rate of attendance at the Muslim Centre which could perform the role of an ethnic institution, also given the fact that they are the most numerous Muslim group in Milan. Moreover although there is some degree of in-group interaction, ties of solidarity and ethnic consciousness are weak and an attempt to establish an "ethnic organization" has been met with scepticism by most "ordinary" Egyptians. On the other hand, class differentiation and a preference for marriage with Italian women, are among the most significant characteristics.

Following McKay and Lewins' (1978) typology, Eritreans can be characterized as an "ethnic group" (in-group interaction is prevalent) with "ethnic consciousness" (i.e. "Eritreanness" is the most important source of social identification), while Egyptians as an "ethnic group", but with "ethnic awareness"

(i.e. 'Egyptianness' is not the primary source of identification). This affects the different possibilities of collective action and mobilization of group interests (cf. chapter 7). On the other hand some of the people attending the Muslim Centre, might be defined an "ethnic group with ethnic consciousness", but only with religion as the basis of their "ethnicity". This chapter has put forward some explanations for these differences in terms of the different strength and character of the identity of the two groups due to the different backgrounds of origin analyzed in chapter 2. It has also suggested that they should be related to the different demographic characteristics analyzed in chapter 4. However the most important argument in terms of ethnic politics i.e. of the resources the ethnic institutions and leaders can mobilize for the group, and of "cultural strategies", i.e. of the image the groups present to the "host society" as opposed to the internal one analyzed in this chapter, will be put forward in the following chapter and in particular in chapter 7.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

(1) Although father Yohannes is really a friar of the Cappuccini order, he will be referred to as a priest, because his social role in relation to the (Eritrean) faithful is more akin to that of a priest than that of friar.

(2) See Hallyday and Molyneux (1981, p.169) and Firebrace and Holland (1984 p. 17), who claim that up to one fifth of the Eritrean population living in towns already in the 1940s, as opposed to only 8% for Ethiopia as a whole in 1975 (O'Connor 1983, p.45).

(3) See Firebrace and Holland 1984 for a brief account of the EPLF's organizational structure.

(4) "Front" will hereafter refer to the EPLF, unless otherwise specified.

(5) For instance bruch (Tiginya) and baruch (Hebrew), meaning "blessed"; sh'm and shem, name; kahen and cohen, priest; hadesh and hadash, new.

(6) Cf. Firebrace and Holland (1984, pp.160-161) where it is stated that "our (i.e. Eritrean) struggle is an integral part of the international revolutionary movement in general and the struggle of the African, Asian and Latin American peoples against colonialism, imperialism, zionism and racial discrimination in particular".

(7) But cf. Giuseppe's remark on Tigray in the previous section.

(8) The figure is calculated as follows. By looking at Table 5.2 (chapter 5) there are 155 "Ethiopians born in Italy" between 1979 and 1984. Adding to this figure the 31 average yearly births in that period for the missing 1985 year, we reach the figure of 186.

(9) As outlined in chapter 3, circumcision although not prescribed by the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, is largely tolerated as it is deeply rooted in Abyssinian tradition. Moreover it has a distinctly Judaic character, as opposed to that practiced by many other African peoples, in that it is performed on the eighth day. (cf. Ullendorff 1967, pp.105-109).

(10) Father Yohannes is not authorized to perform marriages recognized by the state. Therefore his marriages do not appear in the "religious" section of the Municipality's register. Although there is a "sacramental" form of marriage (i.e. in which the priest acts as intermediary between the couple and the Divinity who seals the union, that is the Catholic form of marriage), most Abyssinian marriages are carried out as a contract between two families in the presence of some witnesses with the priest acting just as "ritual expert", thereby maintaining its semitic character. (cf. Ullendorff 1973)

(11) The word "Community" (with a capital "C"), will hereafter refer to this organization, as opposed to "community", usually used as a substitute for "group".

(12) On this subject, cf. the collection of articles in Curtis (ed. 1982, already mentioned in chapter 3, and in particular the articles by Curtis, Jankowsky and Humphreys.

(13) "Centre" will hereafter refer to the Muslim Centre.

(14) On the Sufi, cf. chapter 3 and Gilsenan (1983)

(15) A background to the characters mentioned here can be found in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 6: LOCAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICS

This chapter looks at the role of some of the main voluntary organizations dealing with Third World immigrants, examining attendance at the various organizations on the part of Eritreans and Egyptians in terms of the different services they provide vis a vis the different requirements of the two groups. It will also try to assess the impact that these institutions have on the situation of the migrant groups and the attitude and role of the Milanese trade unions and local authorities. While the two preceeding chapters have analyzed the topic of enquiry mainly from inside the two "ethnic" groups, this chapter is the first of two analyzing the situation at the boundary. In doing so this chapter will also examine different styles of ethnic politics of the two groups, involving political and personal contacts between the leaders of the groups and those of the voluntary organizations and local state authorities. These patterns will have important effects for the "cultural strategies" and informal access to resources analyzed in the next chapter. Groups other than Eritreans and Egyptians will also in part be taken into account not only because these organizations and institutions deal with them too, but also because it will throw into relief the peculiarities of the two groups in consideration.

6.1 General characteristics of local voluntary organizations

From chapter 3 it can be inferred that the only relationship the migrants have with the Italian state or its representatives, is that with the police authorities, or Questura, that is a relationship of control by the latter. Many migrants try to avoid this situation by migrating as clandestines. In many respects this situation reproduces that of the early 1960s when the migrants from the South to the northern "industrial triangle" did not receive any social or juridical assistance from the state institutions, but only from the voluntary sector, or volontariato (cf. Fondazione Franco Verga 1985). Any function in terms of help or assistance that the "host" society performs, is left to the volontariato. This sector, including voluntary cooperatives, associations, organizations and institutions, has traditionally been a stronghold of the Catholic world, in its manifold manifestations, usually stemming from the more "solidaristic" and "workerist" parts of this world. These organizations, like ACLI and CISL (cf. below) were often quite independent from the DC and the Church, expressing more radical points of view on matters of civil rights as well as on Third World development and disarmament. From the 1950s onwards, however, also the Communist party and, in the 1970s, other left-wing groups, started to operate in this sector. These left-wing groups were also quite critical of the PCI and in particular of its dogmatism and its position on the Soviet intervention in foreign countries, like Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Eritrea. In general they shared a "Third Worldist" ideology. Some of the leaders

of these movements and organizations originally came from the Catholic world and some of them went back to it after the crisis of these movements in the late 1970s.

The decline of southern migration in the 1970s and the unexpected rise of a "new" immigration from the Third World, confronted the volontariato with a new set of issues, especially in the face of the almost total neglect of the problem by the state authorities. Some of the already existing organizations dealing with southern immigration, had to adjust their services to the demands posed by the new immigration. In other cases, new sub-sections or semi-independent organizations were set up by the larger associations, concerned with other issues as well. Predictably, it was the Catholic world, traditionally more sensitive to these problems, that first took steps in this direction. This happened not only with associations most directly linked to the Church, like Caritas, or to the traditional Catholic and Christian Democrat social world, but also with those Catholic-inspired associations involved in labour, trade unionist and cooperativist activities. It must be noted, however, that the Catholic "ideology" of these associations is present in very different degrees. In any case, very few associations operating with foreign migrants were not directly or indirectly Catholic inspired, like the International Social Service, linked to the United Nations, and the Valdese (Italian Protestant) Church. Interestingly enough, no association linked just to the left and without any Catholic links, has yet mobilized in terms of providing

services to the migrants, except in relation to the Eritreans, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The next section will look at the "ideological" characteristics of the associations involved and at the kind of services they provide, trying to find out if there is some pattern in the differential attendance at them by the various immigrant groups in relation either to "ideological" characteristics, or to the kinds of services provided. In terms of services, the main difference will be whether they give temporary assistance (e.g. food, access to dormitories, money subsidies), or help with more long-term integration (e.g., legal and political rights, education). From an ideological point of view the main difference will be between those organizations closer to the more traditional sections of the Catholic world, or those with a more progressive orientation, whether linked to the Catholic world or not. An important point that will also be noted is the presence of political or personal links between leaders of the ethnic groups and those of the voluntary organizations and local authorities. This will not only affect the attendance at the various organizations, but also the processes of ethnic politics described in the next chapter.

6.2 Characteristics and services of the organizations and attendance at them by the migrant groups

This section will demonstrate that the different Eritrean and Egyptian attendance at the the various organizations listed below, is affected for both groups by the types of services

they provide (i.e. temporary subsidies vs. long-term integration) in relation to the different needs of the groups and, for the Eritreans, by the presence of links between their leaders and the leaders of the associations. From chapter 5 it can be hypothesized that the Eritrean group, with a more effective and cohesive solidarity network than the Egyptian one, does not need the first kind of services so much and can opt for the second one, while for the Egyptians the reverse is true. The types of services and these kinds of links are also partly accounted for by the ideological nature of the organizations, i.e. by whether they are of a more "progressive" or of a more "traditional" Catholic nature. Of the first kind, CESIL, the Volta school and ACLI will be mentioned. All of them help with long-term integration and have strong links with the leaders of the Eritrean group, in particular the EPLF, and have a high rate of Eritrean attendance and a low Egyptian one. Of the two more "traditional" Catholic ones, the Franco Verga Foundation partly helps with long-term integration and partly gives temporary subsidies, but has the "wrong" links with the Eritrean community, i.e. with members of the ELF (the minority front) and has very low Eritrean and Egyptian attendance. Caritas on the other hand, even though it has "good" links with the Eritreans, i.e. with Father Yohannes, is specialized in temporary subsidies and has a rather low Eritrean attendance. On the other hand even though it does not have "good" links with the leadership of the Muslim Centre which anyhow does not represent the Egyptian group (cf. chapter 5), it has a high Egyptian attendance because of the character of its services.

Caritas

Caritas is a big organization directly linked to the Catholic Church, with sub-sections for each diocese, involved with various kinds of assistance. In the late 1970s with the growing Third World immigration in Italy, its leaders decided to set up centres (for each diocese) dealing specifically with this problem. In Milan, Turin and Genoa, among which there is some coordination at this level, this was done in 1977. In Milan there are actually two centres belonging to Caritas dealing with Third World migrants, one of them especially concerned with students and providing some space for educational and recreational activities for the migrant communities, if needed, the other providing general "assistance" to the migrants. Both centres are run by the same staff including two priests, one nun and one conscientious objector. The leader of the staff, called Don Cesare is what might be described as an "establishment" priest, with a good educational background and concerns for "social problems". The second priest, called Don Mario, has had seven years experience in a mission in Peru, having become consequently quite interested in the Latin American "liberation theology" and in Paulo Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed" (cf. Freire 1971), is perceived as quite a "radical" priest. The nun is a more conventional one, full of piety and of a sense of the missionary importance of Christianity. Sometimes they hold masses on major Christian holidays to which they invite also non Roman-Catholic and even non-Christian people to participate, but Don Mario told me he is not at all happy when his two other colleagues try

to convert non-Christians. They have some relationship with Father Yohannes, whom they invited to co-celebrate one of those "interconfessional" masses, but Don Mario would like to develop also some relationships with the EPLF. Conversely with the Muslim Centre they have definitely an uneasy relationship because although they do not want to look anti-Muslim, they resent the (Muslim fundamentalist) accusation of "cannibalism" (i.e. the eating of the flesh of Christ into which the Eucharist gets transubstantiated) the Centre levels against Catholicism in particular.

Both Caritas centres are intended specifically for foreign migrants and were not in existence in the years of southern Italian migration. As very few of the students are either Eritrean or Egyptians, the centre helping students (especially in the University) with bureaucratic problems will not be analyzed. While there are nearly always two or three Eritreans at the events organized by this centre (masses, Christmas parties, etc.), their presence is not substantial. As far as Muslims are concerned, although a few attend these events, they mostly come from the countries other than from Egypt. The vast majority of the migrants who attend them, however, usually come either from Latin America, or from the Philippines, or from West Africa. A small course teaching Italian, following Paulo Freire's pedagogy (1), had only limited success drawing four Philipinos, two Salvadoreans, two Indians, two Eritreans and one Chilean. The course was on Thursday afternoons, which are free for maids, but not for cooks, etc. Although the staff of Caritas is aware of the shortcomings of assistenzialismo, i.e. temporary

remedies to monetary, housing, etc. problems, without tackling the root of the problem, (i.e. to try to change the restrictions of the host society and "helping the migrants to help themselves"), the centre dealing with other categories of migrants (i.e. non-students) does operate in this direction. The main services provided are: assistance to find temporary shelter usually in one of the destituted people's dormitories, vouchers for meals in Church-run refectories, limited monetary assistance for journeys and other purposes, limited medical assistance and travel cards for buses and underground.

Attendance by the various national groups present in Milan can be seen from Table 6.1, based on the results of a survey carried out by Caritas. The main requests, for all national groups, are provided by Table 6.2. The replies to the above requests were positive in 80.16% of the cases and negative in 19.84% (ibid.). The criteria by which a person is granted or refused the assistance he/she requests are not objective, but seem to be based on the type of request the person makes as related to his/her migration history and current situation and the availability of the resource requested. However it is also possible that decisions are made on the discretionary basis of "instinctive sympathies" between the staff and the migrant, also related to the perception by the former of whether the latter falls within his/her own identity boundary (cf. Flett 1979). Concerning the kinds of requests put forward by the migrants, these requests are partly conditioned by the information and perception of what services a centre has actually to offer,

Table 6.1: Requests for assistance by Caritas (January 1984 - September 1984) by nationality

Egypt:.....	18.2%
Morocco:.....	13.9%
Tunisia:.....	8.8%
Ivory Coast:.....	8.2%
Eritrea and Ethiopia:.....	6.4% (2)
(Eritrea:.....	2.9%)
(Ethiopia:.....	3.5%)
Ghana:.....	4.9%
Algeria:.....	4.8%
Zaire:.....	4.7%
Nigeria:.....	4.7%
Lebanon:.....	3.3%
Somalia:.....	2.9%
Others (42 nationalities):.....	7.2%

Source: "Terzo mondo in casa nostra: una urgente riconciliazione" (Caritas 1985, unpublished)

Table 6.2 Requests for assistance by Caritas (January 1984 - September 1984) by type of request

Housing:.....	26.6%
Subsidy for travelling:.....	21.4%
Clearance of luggage from deposit:.....	7.2%
Cash:.....	6.2%
Medical assistance:.....	5.8%
Employment:.....	4.9%
Coupon for shower:.....	4.1%
Telephone call:.....	3.7%
Subsidy for studying:.....	3.6%
Assistance for bureaucratic procedures:.....	1.8%
Tickets or travel cards for public transport:.....	1.4%
Coupon for hairdresser:.....	1.0%
Procedures for obtaining the status of political refugees or to expatriate:.....	0.8%

Source: *ibid.*

as pointed out by the paper mentioned above. The above requests therefore seem to match quite closely what is "on offer" at Caritas, as opposed to other organizations. The assistance provided by Caritas is therefore of a short-term kind as it can be seen by the kind of services they provide also because "housing", refers mainly to the allocation of the migrants to dormitories. In this respect, while there is a high attendance at Caritas by the Egyptians, who are by far the most numerous group attending this organization, the attendance by the Eritreans and Ethiopians combined is not very significant, especially taking into account the relative size of the group, probably greater than any of the groups preceeding them in Table 6.1. It should be concluded that, at least as far as Caritas is concerned, "religion" (i.e. the fact that Caritas depends directly from the Church and is run by ecclesiastical staff) is not a discrimination in the attendance at it, as the vast majority of people who do are Muslims.

What seems to be more important is how the services provided match the needs of the various migrant communities. In this respect the Eritreans who can rely on a more effective "ethnic" network reaching more or less all members of the community, seem to be less interested than the Egyptians who have a more fragmented community and are therefore more exposed to immediate needs like getting temporary shelters in dormitories, short-term subsidies and so on. This despite the fact that Father Yohannes, as a member of the Catholic Church, has very good relations with Caritas. In this case the kind of services provided in relation to the different

needs of the two migrant groups are the most significant factors affecting their different attendance, in spite of the absence of personal ties with the Egyptian group and their presence (with Father Yohannes) in the Eritrean case. This link is however important (cf. chapter 7). Finally Caritas has some links with more or less all the main organizations involved with Third World immigrants, most of whom are part of the "Migrants' Committee". However the closest links, not approved by all its staff, are with the Franco Verga Foundation, which is also closely related to the Church, through the Christian Democrat party. This also assumes the character of a "spiritual fatherhood" that Don Cesare often assumes vis a vis the leaders of the Franco Verga. While relationships with ACLI, the International Social Service and the Volta school tend to be neutral, those with CESIL, one of the most important of these associations, tend to be tainted by a certain competition, also due to their different approach to these problems and rather different aims.

Franco Verga Foundation

This association, also of a "traditional" Catholic character and with a very low Eritrean and Egyptian attendance, was founded in 1963, during the heyday of the South-North migration, by a Christian Democrat member of parliament, Franco Verga, together with other people linked to the DC. The ideological position of the centre has always been close to the Church and especially to the "solidaristic" message of pope John XXIII. The centre had the aim of tackling the following problems: a) assisting with the first stages of arrival and emergencies; b) finding housing; c) finding

employment; d) free time and social activities; e) illiteracy (Fondazione Franco Verga 1985). However the 1964 budget reported that 63.8% of its expenditure was in the form of direct monetary subsidies to the migrants, even if for the above purposes (ibid., p.59). In the early 1970s it ventured into the construction of houses for the migrants, by forming a cooperative. But after a scandal that arose because of the alleged disappearance of part of the public funds for this aim, in August 1975 Franco Verga was found dead in a fountain in Milan, probably having committed suicide as reported recently by a newspaper (il Manifesto 29 August, 1985). After a couple of years his collaborators reopened a centre in his name, still keeping links with the original concern with southern migrants, but starting to deal primarily with foreign ones. The main ideological links were still with the Church and with the Christian Democratic party, in which the president of the Foundation successfully stood for a post as Municipality councillor in the 1980 local elections, but unsuccessfully in the 1985 ones. The Foundation is made up by a president, a secretary and one clerical worker. It is partly funded by the Church and partly by the local authorities. It is located in central Milan

The main services of the Foundation are similar to those of Caritas, perhaps with a more limited amount of funds available. These services include: small monetary subsidies for various purposes, advice and assistance on problems linked to employment, housing, permits and, for students, to registration on various courses. Sometimes students are also helped in getting the books they need. From 1984 the

Foundation has also set up an Italian literacy course for foreign migrants. Every year it also organizes a congress on the topic of Third World migration to Italy, with a few DC politicians, high ecclesiastical authorities and academics. Apart from a few "analytical" papers, these congresses are usually more a presentation of the Foundation to the media and to local politicians and a claim for the rights of Third World immigrants, than a scientific endeavour.

No data on attendance at the assistance centre have been provided, but officers of the Foundation supplied a list of those who attended the 1985-86 literacy course (cf. Table 6.3) saying that it also gives a good idea of the general attendance at the Foundation. This can also be compared with the attendance at the Volta school, which will be discussed below.

It is noticeable that by far the most numerous group, by broad area of origin, is from West and Central Africa, making up more than 57% of the total. On the other hand Northern Africans amount to just over 27%. The percentage of Egyptians is, as will be seen below, quite similar to that of the Volta school (also providing literacy courses). In terms of subsidies (which are of a more short-term kind) the more limited amount of funds available to the Foundation with respect to Caritas, probably explains why Egyptians attend more the latter. This and the short-term character of the Foundation's services also explain the low Eritrean attendance (assuming that attendance at the course also reflects attendance in general). But what is more striking,

Table 6.3: Numbers attending Franco Verga's Italian literacy course (1985-1986)

Upper Volta:..... 3	Israel..... 1
Austria:..... 1	Morocco..... 7
Ivory Coast:..... 21	Nigeria..... 13
Egypt:..... 4	Pakistan.... 8
El Salvador:..... 1	Benin..... 1
Equador:..... 1	Sierra Leone 7
Ethiopia/Eritrea: 1	Tunisia..... 1
Ghana:..... 2	Zaire..... 1
Iran:..... 2	
Total:.....77	

Source: Fondazione Franco Verga 1986 (unpublished)

is the virtual absence of Eritreans from the course, usually over-represented in courses providing educational opportunities and, on the contrary, the high rate of attendance of West Africans, usually not so much in contact with host society institutions, also due to the relatively smaller size of the group. There may be several reasons for this. One of these is probably that as the Franco Verga course was established only in 1984, four years later than the Volta one, the Eritreans, whose migration is older than the West African one, started to attend the latter after having arrived in Milan. Secondly, from interviews with the Franco Verga staff, the usual Eritrean attitude of "sticking together and therefore not practicing Italian" is less appreciated by the officers of the Foundation than the more "diligent" one of West Africans. This probably conceals the fact that the Eritreans conduct their "usurpatory cultural strategies" more through the Eritrean Community and leaders (albeit with the support of some "host society" organizations) than through Franco Verga, which tends to assume the position of "patron" of the migrants. Finally, although Father Yohannes was present at the inauguration of the Franco Verga's courses and they do include one Eritrean teacher, called Selassie, he belongs to what is probably the "losing" faction of the Eritrean community, linked to Tolde (the ELF leader, cf. chapter 5). These topics will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Apart from the relationship with Caritas and Don Cesare in particular mentioned above, relationships with other associations are very weak. Although Franco Verga is a member

of the "Migrants' Committee", its involvement in it is not very active. This is probably because it would rather earn its reputation as a "fighter" for migrants' rights under the umbrella of the Christian Democratic Party, than of that of the more heterogeneous Migrants' Committee. Although the leader of the Foundation points out that he does not have any political benefits (in terms of his commitment in the local elections) from working with the migrants, since they do not have the right to vote, in an election leaflet for the 1985 local elections he was portrayed among "coloured" migrants, perhaps hoping to strike a chord with the more "charitable" section of the Christian Democrat electorate. This involvement with Dc is perhaps also a reason for which the Eritreans refrain from getting too involved with the Foundation since, although they do make use of politics, they are aware of the danger of becoming "instrumentalized" by one party (which is prohibited by the statute of the Eritrean Community, cf. chapter 7).

CESIL (Centro Solidarieta' Internazionale lavoratori) (3)
This centre has definitely a more "progressive" ideology and helps with more long-term integration than the previous two. It thus has a high Eritrean attendance and a relatively low Egyptian one. It was set up in the 1970s with the help of CISL (the Catholic section of the trade unions) with the main aim of providing foreign migrants with information concerning their legal and political rights when staying in Italy. It is partly still funded by CISL and partly by public funds, usually from the Municipality, the Province or the Region. It is run by a young Italian professional with

the help of a Salvadorean woman and of a conscientious objector who is in charge of the clerical work. CESIL is quite self-conscious of its professional and non-assistenziale task and sometimes puts itself forward or is perceived by others, as the spearhead of the associations dealing with Third World migrants. It is located in central Milan, quite near the area of concentration of Eritrean restaurants. The centre is specifically devoted to foreign migrants, especially given their legal problems. Its main task is to provide the migrants with legal advice on their rights to sojourn in Italy, to have the necessary authorization to find legal work. This often takes the form of a request to regularize an irregular position, which is possible for those who entered Italy before December 31, 1981, or to renew or to extend the sojourn permit. Other advice that is provided is on "family union" (cf. chapter 3), on trade union rights and on schools and courses. In addition CESIL often lends its premises for meetings of the Solidarity Committee with the Eritrean people (cf. the next chapter).

In an unpublished document, CESIL surveys attendance at its centre, but unfortunately the data refer to broad geographical areas of origin and not to single nationalities. However through an interview with the leader of the centre, it has been possible to estimate them, at least for the Eritreans and the Egyptians (see Table 6.4.).

Besides a fall in Asian attendance and a rise in Latin American attendance (due to the fact that a Salvadorean officer has been employed in that period), the table shows a

Table 6.4 Numbers attending CESIL by broad area of origin
(January-September 1983 and January-September 1985)

	1983	1985	% change 1983-1985
Asia:.....	22%....	9%.....	-13%
North Africa:.....	13%...	17%.....	+4%
(Estimate for Egypt:...	8%...	10%.....	+2%)
Rest of Africa:.....	30%...	25%.....	-5%
(Estimate for Eritrea: 25%...	20%.....		-5%)
Latin America:.....	30%...	38%.....	+8%
Non-EEC Europe:.....	4%....	9%.....	+5%
Others:.....	1%....	2%.....	+1%

Source: "L'intervento CESIL: orientamento e consulenza", 1985, Milan (unpublished)

Table 6.5 Requests for assistance by CESIL January-September 1985

1) Procedures to regularize legal situation:	19%
2) Sojourn permit (extensions and renewals):	25%
3) Authorization to work:.....	3% or: 4%*
4) Medical assistance:.....	26% or: 25%
5) Advice on schools and courses:.....	5% or: 21%
6) Legal consultancy:.....	0% or: 12%
7) Family union.....	9% or: 14%
8) Advice on trade union rights:.....	11%

Source: ibid., personal elaborations

* Note: the second set of figures refers to instances where more than one request was made by the same person.

slight increase in Northern Africans, mainly Egyptians, and a slight decrease of those from "the rest of Africa", mainly Eritreans. This is due to the increase of attendance, in percentage, by the other groups, while the absolute number of Eritreans probably remained constant, the total number (for all groups) having considerably risen from 1983 (4). The most significant fact, however, is that by far the greatest attendance by an immigrant group, is that of the Eritreans. The requests put forward by the migrants, that are partly related to what is "on offer" at the centre, helps to understand the reasons for this. The same document reports the main requests put forward by the migrants, out of 240 cases (see Table 6.5).

The leader of CESIL said that overall Egyptians make mainly the first two kinds of requests, while the Eritreans mainly the last five types, the percentage of which rises taking into account situations when more than one kind of request was put forward. The first request can be made by those who can show evidence of having entered Italy prior to December 31, 1981. Together with the second request it usually denotes one of the first stages in trying to get out from "clandestinity", while the last five denote a "further" stage of penetration in the "host" society which involves starting to claim legal rights. It is not surprising in this respect that the Eritreans should be making these requests more than the Egyptians since their "usurpatory strategy" and political discourse are more oriented towards enhancing their social situation as a group by claiming their legal rights, than the Egyptians. The fact that the services provided by

CESIL 'are mainly of this kind, as opposed to those of Caritas, and that the Eritreans seem to be the most numerous national group attending it, is an evidence of the argument. This is reinforced by the location of CESIL near the area of Eritrean restaurants and bars and by the links it has with the EPLF, through the Solidarity Committee.

Finally, concerning relationships with other associations, CESIL is a little isolated from the other associations since it is sometimes charged with excessive "technicism". However many other associations send people to CESIL when they have precisely a "technical" problem they cannot deal with. However it does have a working relationship with ACLI, which is another workers' association, and with the Volta school, which sends CESIL people with legal problems they cannot solve and in turn, through their courses, trains some people who got the information from CESIL.

The Volta school

The Volta school consists of a series of courses teaching Italian to foreign migrants, plus one Tigrinya course for illiterate Eritreans. The courses, funded by the Milanese municipality are held in the afternoons in a state high school which lends its premises for these purposes. These courses were first organized in 1980, especially through the commitment of a young woman called Simona, who used to collaborate with CESIL. The Volta school, as an institution dealing with Third World migrants, is one of the few not institutionally or ideologically linked to the Catholic world, but rather to the "lay" and "progressive" sections of

the Milanese civil society, although, like in many cases of "progressive" associations, linked to the Catholic world, like CESIL, it is hard to make such a clear-cut distinction. Besides Simona, who has some experience as a teacher and had a background in pedagogy and linguistics, the Italian staff is made up of two graduates in the humanities. In 1982 when Tigrinya literacy courses were introduced, a two person Eritrean staff was employed, linked to the EPLF and including Tekle, starting also to teach Italian to Eritreans from 1984.

The Volta school provides only Italian and Tigrinya courses to the migrants. The school is free, but some kind of sojourn permit is needed to attend it. However many migrants use the school precisely to get a sojourn permit, even if only for "study purposes", by showing a "pre-registration" to the school to the Italian authorities. Regarding the Italian courses, there are three levels of study: a) "literacy" (for illiterate people, which, in the first years, were also attended by Italian illiterates); b) "orientation" (for literate people with no Italian knowledge); c) "consolidation" (for literate people with some Italian knowledge). Even if, besides the Eritrean teachers there is also a Chinese one teaching Italian to an entirely Chinese class, no Chinese courses are provided. Although most classes are nationally mixed, there are some which are predominantly or entirely Eritrean or Chinese. No other services are provided besides teaching, but attending the Volta school often proves to be an important source of contacts to gain information about other courses, like the ACLI one (see

below), other associations, like CESIL (located very near the school) or just to establish relationships of friendship.

Looking at Table 6.6, it can be seen, leaving aside the "Italians" (probably many of whom are of Ethiopian/Eritrean origins), that the "Ethiopian" group is by far the most numerous, making up more than 50% of all the participants in each year and increasing in absolute numbers nearly six times from the first to the last years of the courses. Only in the last year, after the introduction of a Chinese teacher, has there been a group capable of matching the scale of Eritrean participation, i.e. the Chinese one. The Egyptian group, after the first two years, has shown a more or less constant participation around an average of nearly 5 students per year and comes a distant third in the total number of participants each year. The massive Eritrean attendance at the Volta courses, contrasts sharply with their virtual absence from the Franco Verga ones. Again, part of the reason may be that the former was established nearly four years before the latter and since the Eritreans were one of the first groups to have migrated to Milan (with a high proportion of illiterate women), they attended the first school available to them. This was then reinforced by the introduction of EPLF Eritrean teachers and in particular Tekle.

On the other hand the Egyptians who migrated on average later, attend both schools without any significant difference (5). Moreover being generally more literate, they can perhaps learn Italian slightly faster. This can be seen from Tables

Table 6.6 Numbers attending the Volta Italian literacy course
by nationality (1980-86, all levels)

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Italy	13	9	7	6	0	0
Ethiopia	11	25	27	25	56	60
Egypt	1	0	6	5	3	4
China	0	0	0	0	5	27
Morocco	0	0	0	2	1	2
Iran	0	0	0	1	6	6
Somalia	0	0	0	1	2	1
Zaire	0	0	0	0	2	2
Others	0	1	2	5	16	9
Total	25	35	42	45	91	111

Source: Favaro, G., 1986 "Il quadro degli interventi
formativi" (unpublished)

6.7 and 6.8, showing the proportion of national groups by course level and the sex-ratio and marital status, that are enlightening in this respect. Table 6.7 shows that the vast majority of Eritrean participants at the Volta courses are illiterate women who are quite numerous among Eritrean migrants. Table 6.8 also reinforces a lot of what was mentioned in the previous chapter about the different marriage patterns between Eritreans and Egyptians (6). What is important is that since women are the predominant force in the Milanese Eritrean community and Italian literacy is a precondition of being able to engage in the local political game in which Eritreans are much more active than Egyptians (cf. chapter 7), Eritreans attend Italian literacy classes in vast numbers. Moreover the Volta school encourages and supports the direct participation of the migrant groups themselves in local and inter-ethnic politics without the more patronizing approach of the Franco Verga school and often provides a platform for important debates. One such occasion was when the Migrants' Committee discussed with members of various migrant groups the possibility of involving some representatives of the various communities in the Committee itself and about the Municipality's proposal to create a consulting body of representatives of the various migrant groups and organizations assisting them (7). Finally it should also be remembered that the Volta school has chosen Eritrean teachers (e.g. Telke) from the "winning" section of the community, i.e. the EPLF, rather than someone from the ELF's "losing" faction as the Franco Verga did.

The Volta school, being funded by the Municipality, does not

Table 6.7 Eritrean and Egyptian individuals attending the Volta courses, by course level (1984-86)

	1984-85	1985-86
Level a) (illiterates)		
Eritreans	30	31
Egyptians	1	0
Level b) (orientation)		
Eritreans	18	21
Egyptians	0	3
Level c) (consolidation)		
Eritreans	8	6
Egyptians	2	1
Source Favaro, G., personal communication		

Table 6.8 Eritrean and Egyptian individuals attending the Volta courses, by gender and marital status (1982-83)

	Eritreans	Egyptians
Male	8	9
Female	47	0
Married to compatriot	26	0
Married to Italian	1	3
Single	28	6
Source: Favaro, G. and Tudor, C. "Considerazioni sull'utenza 1982-83" (unpublished)		

have any formal links with other private associations. However it has strong informal links with ACLI where Simona has taught in a course for young foreign migrants (cf. below) and with CESIL to whom students are often sent for their legal problems. Some relationship is maintained with Caritas, but none with Franco Verga. The Volta school is not formally part of the Migrants Committee but has lately applied for membership.

ACLI-EMASI

The Association of Italian Christian Workers (ACLI) also helps with long-term integration. It has good links with the Eritrean leadership and therefore has relatively high Eritrean attendance and a low Egyptian one. ACLI is an important movement born at the end of the Second World War with the aim of being "an educative and social movement of Christian workers who live the life of the Church and their experience of the workers' movement". Although at its beginnings ACLI was fairly closely linked to the DC, in the 1960s they started detaching themselves from the DC having some leaders belonging to parties or political ideologies other than the Christian Democratic one, usually on the left. ACLI has also shown some independence from the Church ruling on matters such as divorce (8). Nowadays the Association numbers more than half a million members and 5,500 local sections. They organize services for the workers such as a "Patronate" giving advice on legal and bureaucratic matters concerning pensions, insurances, etc.; courses of professional training for youth and workers (e.g. computers, accountancy, etc.); and courses facilitating workers'

cooperatives. They also try to influence public policies on issues such as employment, nuclear disarmament, etc. As one of its services the Milanese ACLI established in the 1960s a parallel institution called EMASI (Milanese Institute for Assistance, Solidarity and Integration) to help the southern migrants. From the late 1970s this institution also started to deal mainly with Third World immigrants.

Most of ACLI's services are not directly intended for foreign immigrants and many of them are not de facto open to them. Besides EMASI, the other main service of which they make use is a special office assisting colf (the technical name for maids, meaning "family collaborators") with bureaucratic practices and advising them on their rights. More generally ACLI also tries to put some pressure on the government authorities in order to modify the existing chaos in the legislation concerning foreign immigration which gives no rights to the migrants and all the power to the police authorities. Its Catholic-workerist orientation makes it politically quite sensitive to Third World "problems" in a spirit of "solidarity and cooperation", also funding some development projects in Eritrea. It is also understandable that this solidarity is not entirely divorced from the hope that a few of them might join ACLI, but the association is very careful not to try to impose too much on those attending it, especially in terms of religion. The main services for foreign migrants are, however, provided by EMASI

Up to 1984 EMASI was run along similar lines to those of other institutions, giving general advice on various matters,

small direct assistance such as meal coupons for the ACLI refectory or directing migrants to other organizations. Sometimes more specialized services connected to some of ACLI's activities could be provided, like courses for professional training, and sometimes even employment, given the fact that ACLI has quite a few links with the economic world through the workers' cooperatives it sponsors. But at the end of 1984 when a new director was appointed, there was a radical change of approach. The emphasis is now on helping the migrants to help themselves through a project, even if this means concentrating on a more limited number of people. The chosen target group was that of young immigrants between the age of 15 and 24 and the idea of the project was to train them to become plumbers/ electricians. The course, lasting 6 months, included counselling, theoretical training (Italian, maths, physics, hydraulics and electricity) and practical training in which students worked on building sites, often belonging to ACLI cooperatives. Free lunches and free tickets or public means of transportation and a small grant of around £100 a month were also offered. The only requirement to register for the course, besides age, was to be "regular" in terms of sojourn permit. The course was funded by ACLI and ENAIP (its institute for professional training), by the Lombardy region and the EEC.

In terms of attendance, Table 6.9 shows the number of foreign colfs registered at ACLI's office from 1983 to 1985. The membership cards (which provided the source of data) did not specify nationality, but, checking with an Eritrean student, the number of Eritreans could be fairly accurately

deduced from surnames. Table 6.9 shows that the Eritreans are by far the most numerous group registering at this office. This is in line with their general activism and awareness of the need to claim social and political rights. In this case, as far as colfs are concerned, this tendency cannot be compared with an Egyptian equivalent because there are hardly any Egyptian maids. However it can be compared with the Philippino or Salvadorean groups which probably have only a slightly lower absolute number of women with this kind of occupation. The high Eritrean attendance at this office performing a role similar to that of a trade union, further shows the existence of a collective strategy of social enhancement involving the claim of social and political rights, as compared to other migrant groups in Milan.

Table 6.9 Foreign maids registered at ACLI's colf office and the number of Eritreans among them (1983-1985)

	Total	Eritreans	% Eritreans
1983	6	4	66
1984	4	4	100
1985	21	10	47
Total	31	18	58

Source: personal survey from ACLI archives

Concerning attendance at EMASI, the data for general enquiries up to the beginning of 1985 are not very reliable because of the uncertain criteria by which some people came to be registered in the archive and others did not. The data provided by Table 6.10 are therefore to be taken with several pinches of salt. The table shows that the only group consistently attending the EMASI office has been the Eritrean

Table 6.10 Individuals attending EMASI for general enquiries by nationality (1983-85)

Ethiopia/Eritrea..	17	Zaire.....	1
Egypt.....	5	Seychelles..	1
Tunisia.....	4	Madagascar..	1
El Salvador.....	4	Sierra Leone	1
Somalia.....	3	Senegal.....	1
Chile.....	3	Iraq.....	1
Philippines.....	2	Ruwanda.....	1
Ivory Coast.....	2	Rumenia.....	1
Kenya.....	2	Pakistan....	1
Marocco.....	1	Bangladesh..	1
Algeria.....	1		
Total.....	54		

Source: personal survey in EMASI archives.

Table 6.11 Types of requests by Eritrean and Egyptian individuals to EMASI office (1983-85)

	Eritreans	Egyptians
education	4	0
work	6	1
public housing	2	0
welfare/bureaucr. practices	4	0
housing	1	0
dormitory	0	1
subsidy for train ticket	0	1
drug problems	0	1
work & housing	0	1

Source: ibid.

one. The kinds of requests made by the migrants (see Table 6.11) can be understood in relation to the characteristics of the Eritrean group in contrast to those of the Egyptian one mentioned before.

Although on a small scale, the EMASI office provides services directed towards the integration of the migrants in the Italian society. This is done also through its links with the world of employment (workers' cooperatives), with the trade unions (especially CISL), and housing (through the Tenants' Union, SICET, and building cooperatives). Eritrean attendance at it shows again their strategy of long-term collective social enhancement also because they can more easily rely on their own "ethnic" network for their immediate needs (housing, money, etc.). They can thus seek more long-term improvements, like welfare, education and public housing. As for the last of these tasks, EMASI is well suited since it can direct the migrants to SICET (which has an office within the ACLI premises) which played a key role in the process of Eritrean access to public housing, cooperating with ACLI and CISL (cf. chapter 7). On the contrary, Egyptians, belonging to a more socially fragmented group, attend the EMASI office less (compared e.g. to Caritas) and more for emergency subsidies. The Eritreans' long-term strategy of collective social enhancement, in which education plays a major part, is also shown by Table 6.12, regarding the course for plumbers/electricians mentioned before, where they have been by far the most numerous group attending the course.

Table 4.12 Numbers attending the EMASI course for electricians and plumbers (1985)

Eritrea/Etriofia..	7
El Salvador.....	3
Somalia.....	2
Argentina.....	2
Egypt.....	1
Mauritius.....	1
Total.....	16

Source: EMASI: "Noi Giovani Stranieri a Milano" (Milan, 1985)

Another reason for the high Eritrean attendance at the course is that it allowed them to learn some skills which might be useful in the event of an anticipated return to the motherland or might enable them to enter what is perceived (also by Italians) as an economic niche providing good employment opportunities in Milan . Again this quest of Eritreans to enhance their social condition is helped by the existence of a fairly tight community which provides the ideological cement and network described in the previous chapter that allows the migrants to carry out a collective "usurpatory strategy" which entails not only these kinds of occupational enhancements but also sociopolitical ones which will be analyzed in the next chapter. Also in this instance, the Eritrean leadership network and its links with other institutions were crucial. The Eritreans came to the course mainly through the Volta school or CESIL (which have connections with EMASI and ACLI), but also via Father Yohannes. Moreover Tekle and Simona (who also collaborate in the Volta school) were coopted to the organization and teaching of the course. It is due to the lack of this ethnic leadership and links with the "host society", rather than to an absence of a young population (which in absolute numbers

might match the Eritrean one), that Egyptian attendance at this course has been much lower.

This section has demonstrated that Eritrean and Egyptian attendance at the various voluntary organizations dealing with them, has differed according to the kind of services they provided and to the existence of personal and political links between the leadership of the former group and that of the organizations. Thus Eritreans attend organizations that help with long-term integration and that have links with the "winning" sections of their community (i.e. Tekle and the Front and Father Yohannes). These organizations include CESIL, the Volta school and ACLI-EMASI. The Egyptians, on the other hand, do not have a leadership with authority and representation, mostly attend the organizations that can best help them with temporary needs, i.e. Caritas. Together with the next section reviewing the relationship of the migrant groups with other political subjects, such as the trade unions and the local state, these patterns have a profound influence on the process of "usurpatory cultural strategies" examined in the next chapter.

6.3 The trade unions, the "Migrants' Committee" and the local authorities

The trade unions

The trade unions have been among the most important social actors in post-war Italy (cf. Sassoon 1986). The long-established tradition of workers' solidarity and internationalism and the fact that migrants are not

perceived as threatening Italian employment as they occupy the unprotected lower tertiary sector (cf. chapter 3), lead them have a rather different attitude towards foreign immigration from that of most of its European counterparts. That is, for the time being and for the union leadership at least, the foreign migrants are not conceived as "alien competitors" for a scarce resource, i.e. jobs. This does not mean that some sections of the Italian population might not feel some competition, but in this case the workers are not very likely to be unionized in this kind of economic sector. In principle the position of all the three main trade unions (Communist CIGL, Socialist UIL and Christian Democrat CISL) on this question is united and quite clear: they stand for full equality of rights between foreign and Italian workers and denounce the legislative chaos and arbitrariness of the current regulations. They also denounce the blackmailing power that is left to the employers (cf. chapter 3).

However the trade unions do not favour unlimited immigration. Indeed, they advocate a careful planning, assessing the amount of foreign labour needed and carrying out bilateral agreements between the Italian government and the governments of the countries of origin of the migrants. On various occasions they stress that no discrimination against the migrants means equality of rights between migrants in Italy and Italian workers, but not indiscriminate immigration. These positions might be interpreted in terms of labour migration theory (cf. Miles 1982) whereby trade unions are subservient to the shortage of labour of national capitalism filled by foreign immigration. However the trade unions also

have opposing interests with those of the bourgeoisie, as argued below. As to the actual steps towards a better regulation, the trade unions and ACLI repeatedly refer to the standards set by the ILO in a conference held in June 1975. First, they agree that the sojourn permit must be extended indefinitely, at least as long as the migrants have a work contract in the same kind of occupation. Freedom to change occupation must occur, following the ILO, after two years of residence. In case of unemployment the foreign worker must be able on the one hand to use the trade union's contractual power and on the other hand to apply for another job with priority over new migrants. Therefore, for the trade unions, a break of job contract should not automatically mean expulsion from the country. Also, after a period of no more than 10 years of legal residence, a foreign worker should have all the legal rights of an Italian citizen, except for citizenship. Finally, norms concerning the reunion of close relatives (spouse, children and parents) should be made easier. But most importantly the trade unions advocate that the migrants should have the right to defend themselves and put forward their case through some appropriate organisation and that a plan to regularize the thousands of illegal cases due to the existing legislation should be implemented (9).

The trade unions are therefore committed to the planning and regularization of migrant workers in order to give them equal rights and legal status. These aims are more or less shared by the various voluntary associations mentioned above. Part of the reason for this, however, is that they fear that the present situation of more or less tolerated illegality,

implemented by the government authorities, is functional to the present labour market and has the "aim of lowering labour costs and weakening the national working class bargaining power with the grave risk of divisions among the workers", as a trade union leader put it (10). By contrast they see their proposal as discouraging the arrival of new migrants because, by making it less "economical" for the employers to employ them (through social benefits, taxes, etc.), there would be less jobs available on the market. In this case the unions would also achieve the double aim of avoiding dangerous splits and "unfair competitions" within the working class and maybe also slightly reinforce their own ranks, given the fact that they are undergoing a period of crisis (cf. Sassoon 1986).

Although these general purposes are shared by all three union federations, in practice the Catholic section (CISL) has been the most active in this question. In the first place it partly funds CESIL and the Tenants' Union (SICET) that has been crucial to the access that some migrants, especially Eritreans, have had to public housing (cf. the following chapter). In the second place the director of its International Section, Stefano, has been by far the most active among the Milanese union leaders on the subject of migrants' rights (11), also by participating in the "Migrants' Committee" described below. As to the reasons for CISL's greater involvement, it can only be speculated that besides an "ideological" reason (i.e. Catholic universalism solidarity and sense of charity, cf. chapter 3), there might also be reasons of political interest. These may be that

while the bulk of the CGIL's (the Communist section) ranks are made up of engineering workers (cf. Sassoon 1986), CISL, which has a slightly more diversified social base, might draw more benefit from a possible unionization of migrant workers who occupy mainly the (lower) tertiary sector. However all three Milanese sections of the trade unions, and in particular CISL and CGIL, have also supported the Eritrean cause in particular (cf. chapter 7).

b) The Migrants' Committee

In Autumn 1985 all the above associations, except the Volta school plus some others mentioned below, formed a "Committee of associations dealing with foreign migrants", briefly known as "Migrants' Committee". The aim of the Committee was to coordinate the activity of the various associations involved, acting jointly in particular cases, to put pressure on central government to improve the existing legislation and on local government to "ease the social integration of migrants" by allowing them access to housing and social and recreational facilities and in the future to coopt the "ethnic communities" to become part of these sociopolitical activities. The other association members of the Committee, apart from those mentioned before, are the International Social Service (or ISS, a humanitarian organization linked to the UN and the Red Cross), the Valdese Church (an Italian-born protestant Church with a small but influential number of followers), the International League of People's Rights, campaigning especially for the self-determination of oppressed peoples; and Democratic Medicine, an association of left-wing doctors (12).

The most active members of the Committee are undoubtedly the directors of EMASI, CESIL, Caritas, ISS and CISL. It is through their initiative, also because of the links they already had, that the Committee was founded. They thought that a coordination among the various associations operating in this field, would achieve the double aim of improving their services through a better division of labour and reciprocal check on their activities, and on the other hand of putting greater pressure on the political authorities to change the existing legislation. Most of the initiatives are promoted by these organizations whose leaders always attend the meeting of the Committee. This is partly because these associations have been the most engaged in various forms of assistance to the migrants. However Franco Verga, even if operating in the field of immigration and a member of the Committee, is among the least assiduous in participating in it, probably because it seeks more its legitimation within the Christian Democratic apparatus than in an independent forum. Although there are sometimes some tensions, a good cooperation and a minimum of division of labour between the various members has been achieved. The director of Franco Verga, when present, suggests how to deal with the local authorities because of his previous experience there.

While CGIL and UIL are formally members of the Committee, they never attend its meetings. During one of them it was regretted that CGIL had organized a separate meeting to discuss the situation of foreign migrants in the light of new law proposals concerning them after the terrorist attacks of

winter 1985 (cf. chapter 8). There CGIL apologized to the migrants for not having paid enough attention to their problems and announced the creation of a new advisory centre. This was perceived by the other associations of the Committee as the project of an opportunist latecomer which did not want to miss the chance that might be created by the new situation (e.g. if the migrants became "an issue" there might be some funds for organizations dealing with them and new laws might be approved that would be able to regularize some of them who might join the trade unions). In fact the migrants who attended the meeting ("those who are always there", i.e. the Eritreans, as a member of the Committee reported) were encouraged to join the unions although "they looked rather diffident", the same source reported. Naturally those who were most upset by all this were the directors of CESIL and CISL, the first because of the establishment of a rival advisory centre and the second because of the competition over possible membership.

The law proposals concerning foreign migrants that were rumoured to be about to come out after the terrorist events mentioned above, have also been one of the main topics of discussion for the Committee. In a document sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Justice, the Committee underlined that such a proposal still viewed the migrants purely in terms of social control and not of social integration and migrants' rights. On the other hand the Committee viewed with greater favour a law proposal issued by the Ministry of Work which, following more closely the indications of the ILO, would allow the migrants, after

two years residence, to change type of employment and to be unemployed without the sojourn permit expiring automatically. Moreover, it envisaged the possibility for "clandestines" to regularize their position. The member of Parliament who presented this proposal was a former ACLI activist.

Finally the Committee questioned how best to ensure the participation of the "migrant communities" themselves, especially because of the lack of representative leaders in most communities, with the notable exception of the Eritreans (with whom it already has links through the various organizations mentioned in the previous section). This was discussed in a meeting at the Volta school in which members of many groups took part (cf. chapter 7), especially in view of a proposal of the Municipality to create a council of migrants in which not only Italian associations, but also "migrant communities" would be represented. Thus the Migrants' Committee, besides being a unitary pressure group from some sections of civil society (despite some contrasting interests, e.g. between the two trade unions), trying to influence central and local government through lobbying and some links, also has privileged relationships with the Eritrean group. Some members of the Migrants' Committee are also active in a Solidarity Committee with the Eritrean People, which will be discussed in the next chapter. On the other hand no particular links with Egyptians are established, also because of the lack of organization and leadership on the part of the latter.

The local authorities

Regarding the attitude of the local state, the Milanese Municipality has stressed, in the words of its mayor, Carlo Tognoli, Milan's historical tradition of Enlightenment and of tolerance, since it was already able to integrate different Italian regional cultures (a reference to southern immigration), stating that new cultures might even be to the city's advantage (13). Although there are clear rhetorical implications in these statements, the Municipality does seem to line up with the trade unions' proposals, calling for equality of rights with Italian workers (14).

In fact the major limitation that the local authorities have, is that they cannot modify the migrants' major problem, i.e. the regulations concerning sojourn and work permit. Also in terms of housing their power is limited since the majority of the Italian public housing stock, which is state-owned, is by law inaccessible to the migrants, even to those who, working regularly, pay indirect contributions towards the migrants. However in July 1982 the municipal coalition ruled that it could have granted access to its own housing stock to foreigners "in particular case of grave needs". This means that there are no objective criteria to rent public housing to foreigners, but each case must be considered on its own merits. The next chapter will show how different migrant groups have exploited this opportunity in different ways. Moreover the Municipality financed the Italian language courses at the Volta school. One of the major complaints of the migrants however, is that the Municipality does not help them enough where it could, i.e. by granting them

recreational space. In fact, apart from the circus tent the Eritreans rented for the 1984-85 New Year's Eve (cf. chapter 6), most of the recreational space the various ethnic groups have occasionally found belonged to the voluntary sector or to the left-wing movements.

The Lombardy Region, in a law of December 5, 1983, has also ruled in the same terms that part of its housing stock can be granted to foreign citizens. The allocation of housing in Milan, however, is still supervised by a commission controlled by the Municipality. The Region has also jointly funded the ACLI-EMASI course for young foreign migrants mentioned before. The difference of attitude with central government can also be explained by the fact that local council members can be more directly influenced by local pressure groups while lacking the power to implement major changes. Another reason for this can be that while a vote for the migrants for the general elections is not yet envisaged, a vote in the local ones may be granted in the not too distant future.

6.4 Conclusion

The voluntary sector has been the main organized section of the Milanese civil society to deal with the migrants in terms of assistance or social integration and not just of social control. This sector is mainly part of the multi-faced Catholic social universe, with some "workerist" and progressive sections linked to the trade unions, and some more linked to the traditional Catholic institutions, such

as the Church and the DC. The boundary relationship between this side of the "host society" and Third World immigrants in the organizations mentioned above, has identified the Eritreans as the group with the more stable and deeper connections with it.

Attendance at the various associations by the ethnic groups has been differentiated. The main reasons pushing the migrants of one group more to one association rather than another have been less "ideological" in nature (e.g. in terms of religion) and more related to the relationship between the particular situation and needs of one migrant group and what was "on offer" at the various institutions. So the Muslim Egyptians were the more numerous group attending the organization most closely related to the Church and run by priests, i.e. Caritas. This was because the absence of a well developed "ethnic" support network and the greater precariousness of their migration, make them focus on more immediate needs (food, housing, money). The connection between these organizations and the "ethnic" networks, through some influential leaders, is also crucial in order to understand the differential attendance of the migrants. Thus Egyptians have a high attendance at Caritas despite the cool relationship its leaders have with the leadership of the Muslim Centre, as the latter does not have authority over the Egyptians. On the contrary, the Eritreans, are more likely to attend those associations that can help them with a more long-term integration (legal rights, public housing, education), like CESIL, the Volta school and ACLI. But it is also through their influential leadership that they mostly

attend these associations in two of which Tekle, the EPLF leader, works as a teacher. On the other hand, even though they do not attend Caritas so much, they maintain good links with it through Father Yohannes, but less so with Franco Verga because of the "wrong" political connections (i.e. through the ELF).

Finally the trade unions, the Migrants' Committee and the local authorities might have an even greater role for the migrants, the former two because of the political pressures they are exerting which might bring about a change in the legislation, the latter especially in terms of housing as it will be seen in the next chapter. Although ideologically, Catholic universalism has been one of the main factors making these section of Italian society the most concerned with this issue, their attention to it has not always been devoid of self-interest. This applies also to the few non-Catholic related institutions that have operated in this sector as well. Interest might go from support in terms of membership to legitimation of the very existence of the these associations, some of which receive their funds according to their interventions and the attendance they have by the migrants. Although these associations could not change the main structural constraints the migrants had to face (labour and housing market, sojourn and work permits), they could provide some limited assistance within those constraints.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

(1) Paulo Freire is a Latin American pedagogue concerned to teach illiterate people not through the traditional "top-down" approach, but by helping people to gain consciousness of their situation of oppression, and by using topics close to their daily lives (cf. Freire 1980)

(2) Although the two groups were distinct in the publication, they have been considered together because of the uncertain accuracy of the distinction made by the staff (e.g. there are Eritreans born in Ethiopia and vice versa). Also it might be that someone presents himself/herself as Ethiopian or Eritrean for a particular purpose, e.g. to have a stronger claim on assistance because of the famine-stricken Ethiopia that the world knows more about (cf. Patterson 1975, for comparable Caribbean material). However if the distinction reflected the real situation, it would indicate that Ethiopians are more outside the Eritrean network than may be thought, having a degree of attendance at Caritas comparable with that of the groups preceeding them in Table 6.1.

(3) The English translation is: Centre for Worker's International Solidarity.

(4) This is reported in the document which unfortunately does not specify the total number of cases for 1983.

(5) Compare Tables 6.5 and 6.6

(6) The total number of "Eritrean" students reported in this table, include 7 from Tigray and 21 students attending the Tigrinya course. However there are still inconsistencies with the figures reported in the document cited in Table 6.6, concerning both Eritreans and Egyptians.

(7) This episode will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

(8) Part of the information is drawn from an ACLI publication called "Le ACLI" (1986), but cf. also Sassoon (1986, pp. 148-150) who mentions that the youth branches of ACLI came out in favour of divorce in the 1974 referendum and that the Association itself refused to take a stand against it, obviously causing a very angry reaction from the Church.

(9) All this information can be found in a variety of trade union papers, like those by Chittolina (1982) and Vercellino (1983).

(10) Cf. Chittolina (1982), p.6

(11) For example through its monthly publication, Milano Sindacale, mentioned above in note (10), which dedicates its February 1986 issue to "Immigrants, law and trade union".

(12) These organizations have not been dealt with extensively, because they have been less important in the integration of the "new" immigrants. The International Social Service deals primarily with political refugees, but because

of reasons mentioned in chapter 3, this status applies to very few Third World immigrants in Italy. No Ethiopian has been recognized as political refugee between 1983 and 1985. The Chiesa Valdese hardly carries out other activities in this respect besides occasional publications and its participation in the Committee. The International League's main activities is through campaigning, publishing and conferences. Because of its aim, it is particularly sensitive to the Eritrean question. Finally Democratic Medicine has set up a small health centre for migrants which, interestingly enough, is for the time being only open to Eritreans (cf. chapter 7).

(13) Cf. the Mayor's preface to Caputo (1983).

(14) Cf. *ibid.* and the minutes of the session of the Municipality council of the January 20, 1986.

CHAPTER 7: CULTURAL STRATEGIES AND ETHNIC POLITICS

This chapter has two aims. In the first place it will attempt to convey a general picture of the overall strategies the two groups pursue to counter the socioeconomic and political constraints the "host society" imposes on them. This means looking at the interplay between the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics outlined in chapter 4 and sociocultural identity, group institutions, interaction and leadership outlined in chapter 5. It will be argued that the interplay between these two domains as mediated by the different political strategies in which powerful individuals play a crucial role, will lead to different approaches between the two groups in the pursuit of their interests. The role of these individuals is also conditioned by the access they have to resources and links with the "host society", often obtained through the local associations mentioned in chapter 6. In this respect, although some of the neomarxist critique of the reification of race and ethnicity can be accepted (cf. Miles 1982), a simple process of labour migration-racial categorization, fails to explain the different behaviour of different migrant groups. Instead it will be argued that a political approach to the study of ethnicity, as outlined above, provides a better framework for understanding the issues. Also, the particular struggles might not revolve only around purely economic issues (employment and wages) but also around socioreproductive ones (housing, schooling, aggregative spaces), (cf. Castells 1977, 1978) and politico-legal ones.

Secondly this chapter will aim to throw some light on the role of the various "ethnic institutions" and organizations examined in chapter 5 and at the reasons for attending them. It will be argued that besides "cultural" reasons for the different attendance by Eritreans vs. Egyptians at their respective institutions, there may be other reasons concerning the differential access of Eritrean and Egyptian leaders to resources and political links with the Milanese society. Also in this case the different demographic size of the two groups will condition these processes.

7.1 Eritrean cultural strategies and ethnic politics

Chapter 4 has shown that Eritreans are a relatively small group, with a slight female predominance and a relatively differentiated age structure. Women's employment in the domestic sector provides the main source of income, although there are some cases of entrepreneurship. Secondly, Eritreans have a higher degree of "legality" than other groups. In terms of housing Eritreans stand out in comparison with other groups, as only among them were squatting and public housing to be found as solutions to the housing problem. This chapter will try to put forward an explanation in terms of ethnic politics. Chapter 5 identified two ideologically different, but complementary institutions, the Eritrean church and the EPLF, as centres of socialization and group interaction. Their respective leaders, Father Yohannes and Tekle, had a crucial role in organizing activities and drawing support. This situation was formalized in the establishment of an

"Eritrean Community", representing various sections of the Eritrean group. Some aspects of the internal struggles for the control of the group and the conditions of emergence of the Community will now be examined. This will in part be linked to the resources and support the two leaders can draw from the Milanese society by stressing certain aspects of their identity that best fit its dominant politico-cultural discourse. In other words how far do these institutions provide "ethnic resources" (cf. Wallman 1979) and how far does the formation of the Eritrean Community constitute a "cultural strategy" providing a successful articulation of power and decision making to further the group's interests (cf. Cohen 1974a, 1974b)? Finally chapter 6 showed the selective use Eritreans make of the various local voluntary associations and organizations, not only because of the services they provided, but also because of the kinds of connections they established with important sections of the "host society". It will be argued below, that the relationship between them and the "ethnic brokers" mentioned above, provided the mediating channels between the "usurpatory" claims and struggles of the Eritreans and the "exclusionary" policies of the Italian society protected by the state (cf. Parkin 1979).

Father Yohannes' church

Religion is one of the bases of Eritrean identity. However, despite the fact that the vast majority of Eritreans are Ethiopic Orthodox Christians, they do not have a church and a priest of their religion, but attend Father Yohannes' church, who is a Catholic priest. Yet Eritreans still go to

his church rather than to an Italian one because Father Yohannes is an Eritrean, says mass in Tigrinya and, to a certain extent, follows their ritual. He can be perceived by the Eritreans as "one of us". On the other hand, he still is not an Ethiopic Orthodox priest ("although it is not like at home, it is something", as Samuel put it). Even so on endless occasions people would say things like "he's a good man", or "he's a great benefactor of our community" and show great respect for him.

This can also be explained by reference to the resources on which Father Yohannes is able to draw. In the first place he often acts as a guarantor for the immigration of compatriots to Milan. He does so also by using his status as Catholic priest, which is still widely respected in Italy, to establish good relationships with the police officers who issue sojourn permits to foreign migrants in the Questura. Virtually every time I have been to the Questura's Foreigners' Office for my community work (cf. chapter 8), I saw him there negotiating about the immigration of a compatriot with a police officer. This is possible since, as shown in chapter 4, the existing regulations leave wide discretionary powers to the police authorities, which are more likely to help somebody they can perceive as being part of their own cultural system (1).

Secondly, Father Yohannes has an important role in allocating many Eritrean women to work as maids in Italian families. For example in a few days he provided one to some acquaintances of mine (cf. chapter 4). In general Father

Yohannès' role as a Catholic priest, as well as an Eritrean, is crucial. The latter aspect is evident as far as relationships of trust among compatriots is concerned. The former can be understood not only in terms of the great social, as well as religious, role the Catholic Church has in Italy (cf. chapter 4), but also with the fact that Father Yohannes' church is attended not only by Eritreans, but also by Italians. This enables him to establish relationships of trust, through his religious status, not only with the Italians who come to his church, but also with many more, through the network of parishes of which he is a member. It is through this network that he manages to find this sort of employment for his female compatriots, for traditionally priests and parishes are often consulted by Italian families who seek domestic help. This informal arrangement is often beneficial for both the family and the worker, since they can save charges from specialized agencies (2). It might also be noted is that the female predominance in the Eritrean group is well suited for this kind of work, which is socially constructed as "female" (3).

Thirdly in this way Father Yohannes can provide Eritreans with other resources from the Church. For example the premises where feasts are organized after the main religious festivals, with the distribution of free food, and where he runs an advice centre (where every day many people queue up to see him about religious, family and other matters, including work). Also attached to the same premises is a Youth Centre, which will be examined in the next chapter. The Church also subsidizes the equipment for the Milanafrica

football team and summer holidays, usually in Church-owned hostels, for young Eritreans.

Finally, being within the Church can provide useful political contacts, either within the Church itself, or with members of the DC. This is more difficult to assess. To begin with, the relationship between the Church and the DC is not totally evident as the DC is not the "long arm" of the Church, nor vice versa (cf. Sassoon 1986, pp.142-152). Secondly, it is also the case that the DC is composed of many different factions, often in conflict with each other and with changes in the extent of their power (cf. Zuckerman 1978). But more important is the fact that political connections, if not mediated by a relatively neutral institution, are not easily disclosed. However I have been told by a high ranking Municipality officer that the Eritreans do have some connections with the DC, probably through Father Yohannes, even if the DC was not a member of the municipal coalition during the period of study.

In other words, Father Yohannes has the role of a "patron" and of a "broker", vis a vis a large section of the Milanese Eritrean population. He has the role of a broker in that he mediates between members of his community and the Milanese population in allocating jobs and channelling external resources (cf. Scott 1977). He has the role of a patron in that his position has a legitimacy that can be considered "traditional" with respect to the role of the priest in Abyssinian Christianity (cf. Ullendorff 1968, 1973), as he maintains a good deal of the "traditional" Ethiopic Orthodox

rituals. However, the channelling of these resources means that, in exchange, he gets followers for his church and therefore also for the Roman Catholic Church. For example, young Eritrean boys who attend his youth centre, have to follow a catechism course run by him. This means that, from a religious point of view, the Eritreans have a double identity: Catholic (albeit with some Ethiopic Orthodox rituals) to the outside world and Ethiopic Orthodox at home (e.g. circumcision of children, abstention from eating pork). The existence of this "identity gap" is shown by the fact that a nun collaborating with Father Yohannes seemed quite unaware of the extent of ritual and theological differences and looked quite shocked as I was explaining them. Ruth and Abraham both expressed complaints about this nun, the former because although she has known her for many years, she never came to visit her while she was sick (while Father Yohannes did) and the latter because he is not allowed anymore to go on the holidays organized by the church, because "he's too independent".

Father Yohannes therefore has also the role of an "ethnicity builder" through his powers of "benefactor" to the community. This involves a "cultural strategy" in which Eritreans present themselves as a Catholic community to the "host society". This does not mean that any kind of "cultural strategy" is available, nor that they would all have the same outcome. For example stressing a Muslim identity not only would not simply be accepted by the Eritreans in Milan (at least 90% of whom are Christian), but would not enable them to establish the same kind of links with the "host society"

in terms of resources. In other words the "cultural" is neither freely constructable, nor is it neutral in its social consequences. Much of this discussion can also be applied to the Front, which is the second main Eritrean "institution" in Milan.

The Front

The nationalist-radical "Third Worldist" ideology expounded by the Front, is one that is understood by vast sections of the Italian society, linked to the left, and particularly strong in cities like Milan (cf. chapter 3). This means that the Front is also able to establish some links with the Italian-Milanese society whose main benefits are a certain degree of material resources and, more importantly, of political support.

In the first place also the Front can get access to some recreational facilities, through its connections with sections of the Italian left. For example most of the festivals organized by the Front are held in a "social centre" run by one of the groups to the left of the PCI (cf. chapter 3). These groups, typically sensitive to issues related to "Third World liberation", lend their premises for these purposes when possible. Also, the yearly Bologna festival, although relying heavily on the EPLF's organizational strength, would not be possible without the support of the Communist-controlled local authorities, which lend the necessary premises (the camping site and the palace of congress), even if the PCI has an ambivalent attitude to the Eritrean question. Moreover, much of the education, both

in Italian and Tigrinya, is carried out for the Milanese Eritreans in a school that, although not necessitating any particular qualifications, gets most of its Eritrean students through Tekle and other Front activists who teach there.

To understand the nature and extent of political support for the Eritreans in Milan, one of the most important organizations is the "Solidarity Committee with the Eritrean people". It was started in Milan three years ago by a young school teacher called Giulia (cf. chapter 5). Giulia is a member of CISL (the Catholic section of the trade unions, although Giulia is not a believer) and in the 1985 local elections she was elected as a district councillor as an independent candidate within the PCI (of which, however, she is not a member). Besides Giulia, other members of the Committee include an M.P. of the "Independent Left" (4) and secretary of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples", the secretary of the international office of the Milanese CISL (cf. chapter 6), another trade unionist and another school teacher. The aims of the Solidarity Committee are on the one hand to draw public attention to the Eritrean question and on the other hand, to gather material support to send relief or to finance development projects in the liberated areas in Eritrea. On the political question, the Solidarity Committee openly sides with the EPLF, while on the question of aid it has links with ERA (Eritrean Relief Agency). It is formally independent but in practice works in close contact with the EPLF. For this reason there are always Eritrean Front members at its meetings, usually Tekle, sometimes Tedros (cf. chapter 5)

and, more rarely, an officer of ERA. Even if the Milanese Committee is the most active, there are others elsewhere in Italy. The most important ones are from Busto Arsizio, a small but rich town located about 30 miles north-east of Milan, led by another trade unionist; the Verona one, led by an ACLI activist who works as a firm clerk and the Florence one. Rome too has a Solidarity Committee, but it is not very active since its only member is already engaged in a solidarity committee with the Palestinians.

The information and pressure campaign has the common themes of trying to explain the legitimacy of the Eritrean question and the nature of the current struggle of the Eritrean people. This is usually related to the issue of food aid to famished Ethiopia that has been receiving worldwide publicity, especially after the 1985 "Band Aid" concert. Various leaflets pointing out the misuse of relief aid by the Ethiopian authorities and the fact that none of the aid sent through Ethiopian-controlled areas reaches the areas liberated by the Eritrean liberation movements, were distributed in the streets or sent to politicians. Moreover they draw attention to the fact that aid can be used as a political weapon by the Dergue, as it can blackmail the local population by forcing young men to enroll in the Ethiopian army in exchange for food. Finally there is a general call to recognize the right of the Eritrean people to self-determination.

Besides leafleting and lobbying, the Committee also organizes, together with the Front, events which can be aimed

at a wider public. Among them there was a theatre performance given by the celebrated left-wing playwright and actor Dario Fo. At the performance (April 1985) there were about 2,000 people and Tedros gave a speech on the situation in Eritrea. About £6,000 was raised. Later, in October, also in Milan, the Committee organized a big concert with three top Italian performers (mainly folk/rock), also of radical political persuasions, and with Tekle's Eritrean band (cf. chapter 5). Again, Tedros gave a speech. This time more than 7,000 people came and about £25,000 was raised. Even more importantly, all the main newspapers reported the event. It needed a lot of organizational strength to be set up, which came mainly from the members of the Committee as far as renting the site and the equipment and contacting the artists was concerned, while the poster sticking was done by Front militants. Finally the Florence Committee and the League of Peoples organized in December a major congress on the Eritrean question. Various papers on the history, self-determination and rights of the Eritrean people, were given by academics from Florence, Sorbonne and Manchester universities (e.g. David Pool). On the Eritrean side Andemichael Kasai, of the central Committee and Secretary of the EPLF's Foreign Relations office, gave a speech. On the Italian side there were local and national politicians (mainly from the left) and magistrates. A similar Italian attendance was there at the opening day of the Bologna festival, in the palace of congress.

These events might, at first sight, be seen as having hardly any relation to the situation of Eritreans in Milan. However,

even if it is true that the main aim of the Committee is to improve the situation in Eritrea, it has some consequences also for the Eritreans living in Italy. In the first place there is an effort to make Italians sympathize with the Eritrean cause on the basis of historical links, famine and Ethiopian oppression. This might have more long-term consequences for Eritreans in Italy, as argued below. Secondly it enables Eritreans to establish certain social and political links with the Italian society that can be mobilized in various situations. In this respect the Front, mainly through the Solidarity Committee, has links with members of various organizations of the Italian left, even if not with a single party, that are sensitive to "Third World issues" (cf. chapters 3 and 6).

The attitude of the PCI and some of its related organizations, like the powerful CGIL trade union, is more ambiguous. Although in recent times the PCI became more independent from Moscow and only a minority within it still actively supports the Soviet-backed Dergue regime, the fact that it stood with the Ethiopian revolution against Haile Selassie, means that it is unlikely that it would all of a sudden withdraw its support. This emerged from discussions with members of the Solidarity Committee (some of whom are close to the PCI), who also felt that even the Italian government is quite insensitive to the Eritrean issue, because it hopes to be able to exert some influence on Ethiopia which it considers more important than supporting Eritrean nationalism.

In any case the political links identified above do not necessarily have an immediate effect on the Milanese situation. Some of them, however, were activated in the context of the Eritrean Community which gives a wider legitimation to the Eritrean claims as will be shown in the following section. Among the immediate effects can be considered Patria's and Giorgio's activities collecting spare machinery from Italian industries, through the support of the trade unions, to be sent to the Eritrean liberated areas (cf. chapter 5).

It is more difficult to say to what extent a single "patron" or "broker" can be identified within the Front, as there is no single leader like Father Yohannes. It can be argued that Tekle is the best candidate because, although Tedros has a higher rank with the EPLF, his role in the Milanese scene is more limited to political speeches. On the other hand Tekle, together with other Front collaborators like Tesfai and Ghermay, is the main link regarding access to resources like education, recreational facilities and political connections. It is difficult to say whether people follow the events organized by him, just in exchange for these benefits, for the EPLF enjoys widespread popular support in Eritrea. But motives for following the Front in Milan might not be the same for everyone. Nor is "ideological" persuasion always the reason for participating at events organized by the Front.

For example it was noted in chapter 6 that quite a few non Eritrean Ethiopians attend festivals organized by the Front. In Milan I was introduced to a girl of an Amhara-Ethiopian

father and an Eritrean mother and a half-Italian/half-Amhara, both participating at an EPLF festival in Milan, while at the Bologna festival I met a "pure" Amhara-Ethiopian girl. In Milan, the owner of the Keren restaurant allowed the EPLF to display a poster in his restaurant, calling Eritreans to participate at a demonstration it was organizing in Rome. Although his wife is Eritrean, whenever I tried to talk with him about the issue of Eritrean nationalism, he seemed to avoid the topic. Moreover I met quite a few Tigrean Ethiopians at many Front festivals, like Ruth and her son Abraham (the latter however born in Asmara), or Lemlem and her son Haile, all of whom I also met at a TPLF meeting (5). Although most of these people say they participate at these events because of cultural affinities (similar food, music and dances), it is not improbable that they do so also in order to remain within the network of resources the Front provides.

But ideological transgression is not allowed by the Front, as it can threaten its control over the Milanese community. This is shown by what happened when a concert was held in a municipal hall, given by an Ethiopian folk group (based in Addis and sponsored by the Dergue), supposedly to raise money for the famine-stricken Ethiopian population. As soon as the news about it spread, the EPLF, ELF and TPLF issued leaflets in Tigrinya inviting people not to attend the concert. It soon became obvious that the concert was going to be a test of the Ethiopian government's control of the Eritrean group in Milan in comparison to that exercised by the EPLF. This was reinforced by the fact that this event was not advertised

in the media, but only in "ethnic" institutions and in local voluntary associations. Moreover quite a few Eritreans were allowed in without having to pay for a ticket, hardly an appropriate policy on the part of the organizers if the aim was to raise funds. Finally this concert came after a leaflet had been circulated in Milan, issued by the Dergue, accusing the "candit leaders" (i.e. the leaders of the various fronts) of living a cosy and rich life at the expense of the people they claim to represent (6).

At the entrance of the concert hall there were about a dozen EPLF activists plus a few TPLF ones, distributing leaflets (translated also into Italian) pointing out the misuse of relief aid by the Ethiopian authorities. Quite a few Eritrean/Ethiopian people went inside. I asked a young Front activist who these people were and, after a brief talk with Tekle who was standing nearby, he replied that they were unknown Ethiopians. There was a lot of tension and many policemen around. Later Abraham told me that most people who went in were actually Eritreans and that Tekle advised the other Front activist to tell me the opposite. He added that Tekle and the Front put a lot of psychological pressure on people not to attend the concert. He remarked that it was wrong on the part of the Front to prevent Eritreans, not to mention Ethiopians, from attending a concert which was part of their culture, which should be kept separate from politics and that this behaviour could create dangerous divisions within the community. Finally he pointed out that most of the Eritreans or Ethiopians who went in also attended events organized by the Front (7). The transgression of political

divisions for cultural reasons by Eritreans attending "Ethiopian" events, is parallel to that of Ethiopians attending "Eritrean" events, although in the latter case there are also the political benefits outlined above.

In summary, both Father Yohannes and the Front, have a group of followers who give them their support and presence in the events they organize, partly in exchange for being able to use their network of resources and partly because of the legitimacy their leaders have, through their roles, within Eritrean society. However both institutions have a "hard core" of followers who make sure there is no ideological trespassing by others, since the cultural identity these leaders and institutions project, is not necessarily coincident with the persuasion of the followers. For the Front this process involves a "cultural strategy" presenting the Milanese community as a cohesive Eritrean group supporting the nationalist struggle. Chapter 5 has argued, however, that the vast majority of Eritreans in Milan attend both institutions and that an Eritrean Community has been formed. The next section will analyze why and how it was formed and what implications it has for the links identified with the "host society".

The Eritrean Community

Although nowadays (1985/86) the Eritrean Community presents itself as the "natural" representative of a harmonious "Eritrean Community", the process of its formation has been the outcome of the struggle among its various factions. Although the leaders and Eritreans in general are quite

reticent on this topic, some information I was able to get and some hypotheses might help throw some light on this process. These conflicts can partly be explained by the different ideological standpoints. In chapters 2 and 5 the Front's position on religion, attempting to "play down" its role, has been analyzed. From Father Yohannes' and the Church's point of view, the main obstacle is not Eritrean nationalism per se, but the armed struggle. But different ideologies can be accommodated under changing circumstances and there are also devoted Christians who fight within the EPLF in Eritrea and who participate in Front organized events in Milan, and conversely Front fighters and activists who are baptized and circumcised (cf. chapter 5).

More importantly, setting up a "Community" would pose a threat to the respective control over sections of the Milanese Eritreans of the two leaders and their institutions. For example, when I interviewed Father Yohannes and members of the Front about the formation of the Community, they both took credit for it themselves. Father Yohannes told me that it was his idea and that when he proposed it to the Front, they were rather suspicious since it was seen as attempt to draw people away from the arena of nationalist politics and bring them to the Church. A member of the Front (Tedros), told me exactly the opposite. Although the Eritrean Community formally represents all sections of "Eritrean society", including the ELF, the latter is surely a minority force within it. Even if there was a lot of circumspection around this topic, from Samuel (8), I could gather that some years before there was an alternative faction within the Eritrean

group, 'centred around Wolde (the ELF leader), Selassie (the teacher at the Franco Verga course) and himself. He remarked that things were better when they were running part of the Eritrean social life in Milan, until they were displaced by the EPLF. Probably one of the reasons for which it was displaced, was the extent of the political network the EPLF was able to draw on within Milanese society. In spite of this, Wolde is a member of the council of the Community, even if his role seems to be more limited than that of other members. For example he was delegated to give a speech on the situation of Eritreans in Italy, at a congress organized by the League of Peoples on Third World immigration.

Although it has not been possible to trace the political affiliation of all members of the council, besides Father Yohannes and Wolde, it includes Ghermay (member of the EPLF and collaborator of Tekle), a student who is also affiliated to the EPLF, and a woman called Embaynesh, probably linked to Father Yohannes. Tekle is not a member of the council even if, like all Eritreans who apply, he is a member of the Community. However, having most of the political connections, he often acts on behalf of it, also through his position as Italian representative of the Eritrean workers (9). In any case, as the power of decision making within the Community is in the end left to the assembly of members who express it by raising their hands, the most important leaders can still exert their influence on their followers in such meetings by their very presence.

Several factors facilitated the establishment of the

Community. In the first place the already existing flow of people across the two main "ethnic institutions" (cf. chapter 5). Secondly the fact that virtually all their members were known to Father Yohannes and Tekle in face-to-face interactions, the former through his advisory centre and religious functions and the latter through festivals and education. For example Rome, which has a larger Eritrean and Ethiopian population which is probably more fractionalized, still lacks a "Community". More important a reason was probably the realization that setting up a "Community" would also have meant having access to each other's resources. For example two Community meetings were alternatively held in a hall adjacent to Father Yohannes' church and in a Municipality hall provided by the Front to the Solidarity Committee. Also, the youth centre in the church's premises became a premise of the Community, accessible to everybody. The meetings discussed, among other things, how to raise funds to buy a lorry to send to the liberated areas of Eritrea (proposed by the EPLF) and how to help family union from Eritrea to Italy (a question addressed to Father Yohannes).

Among the benefits that could have been drawn from this process, which could also have helped it, there was that of preserving an Eritrean identity, especially in the younger generations, as Wolde pointed out. This is naturally considered important especially by the leaders of the two nationalist liberation movements (cf. the next chapter). Even more important perhaps has been the realization that having a "Community" would have also meant a greater

legitimation of their claims vis a vis the "host society". For example, even in a Church-related institution like Caritas, there was someone, i.e. Don Mario (10), who wanted to establish contacts with the Front, but was afraid of causing a "political accident" with his colleagues who had strong links with Father Yohannes. The Eritreans were very aware of the dangers of presenting the image of a bitterly divided "community", like for example the Iranians.

The importance of the links with the "host society" is recognized in the statute of the Community where it is stated that the council should "establish and strengthen relations with associations and organizations ... whose cooperation could be useful in achieving the social goals" (art.4b). It comes as no surprise that it is precisely the members of the council who can best manage these relations. However there is also an awareness of the danger of instrumentalization by these organizations, and in particular of the political parties that are very powerful in Italian society (cf. chapter 3). The statute further says that "the Eritrean Community ... must be absolutely detached from the political parties". This is also because the parties could provide an alternative leadership to the already established one.

The unitary legitimation of the Eritrean Community is also stressed by the presence of various leaders and members, to virtually all the meetings organized in Milan on the topic of Third World immigration. Eritreans always participate also because they see these meetings as opportunities to put forward their case. Depending on their importance, they send

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are rather unique among Third World immigrants in Milan. As far as the former is concerned, having access to a casa occupata usually implies having a network of relatives or friends already living there who would either be joined in overcrowded conditions (like the Ghebreyesus who, before being moved to a casa popolare, lived with 19 people in two rooms), or who would simply give the information about a vacancy. In this case it is quite common, especially if the previous squatters were Italian, to buy the "tenancy" from them for sums that might reach £1,000. However all this would not be conceivable without the support of the Front leaders who established political relationships with the radical associations who usually control the casa popolari, especially in Milan (12), and who in turn give their backing to the squat.

Even more important has been the relationship with the Tenants' Union called SICET (cf. chapter 6). SICET helps tenants in disputes with landlords and applications for public housing, giving both legal advice and political support. An official working there told me that virtually the only non-Italian people that make use of their facilities are the Eritreans, either for individual or for collective claims and disputes. As an example of the first situation, I met there a young man called Kydane, whom I had seen before both at Father Yohannes' and Front festivals, who was threatened with eviction from his rented flat, together with his newly married wife, and who was therefore applying for public housing. This case, however, had less chance of success than the case in which a whole casa occupata is evicted, usually

for unsafe conditions. In such instances, when the eviction involves Eritreans, Tekle contacts SICET and with its support he negotiates with the local authorities to have people rehoused in public housing. Although foreigners who are entitled to public housing have to be "legal", it was only in 1982 that they had such right, but only "in case of grave needs". This clause means that the process is not automatic, but that each case is judged on its merits. As a result, cases that enjoy political support have a better chance of being solved. The Eritreans are able to do so through Tekle, who can claim to represent the "Eritrean Community" (as he is acknowledged as an influential member) or "Eritrean Workers" (his position in the EPLF) and, with the support of SICET and SUNIA (13), negotiate a solution.

This is what happened in a casa occupata in area 3 (cf. Fig. 4.1), in which a floor had collapsed. The newspapers reported this and a couple of weeks later that officials from SICET, SUNIA and Tekle had met the councillor for public housing who assured them that all tenants, including "legal" Eritreans, would obtain a casa popolare (14). This occurred a few weeks later and Lete (cf. chapter 4) was among the Eritreans who were rehoused. The same thing happened to the Ghebreyesus, who lived in another casa occupata and to Lemlem and her children. Residents from other casa occupate have been rehoused in this way as well, and the officer from SICET said that between 100 and 150 Eritrean families now live in casa popolari, accounting for maybe more than one fourth of the Milanese Eritrean population (15). To their knowledge other groups, including Egyptians, had only a handful of families

living in public housing, mainly because they lack leaders who can represent them and provide links with their associations.

Thus the Eritreans have been able to make use of their links with the "host society", through their leaders, to further their interests in the economic and legal spheres (Father Yohannes' role as "broker" of maids and as guarantor for the immigration of compatriots), but even more so in the sphere of "social reproduction", or "collective consumption", like housing, education, recreation and health (cf. Castells 1976, 1977). Regarding the latter aspect it can briefly be added that a radical association of doctors (Democratic Medicine, cf. chapter 6), also collaborating with the Solidarity Committee, has opened a primary care centre only for Eritreans not entitled to public health assistance. In all these areas, Eritreans were helped by the fact that they had "cultural resources" that fit the "host society" and by having combined them in a "Community" that provided a framework for the articulation of power and decision making (cf. Conen 1969, 1974a, 1974b) and gave a greater legitimation vis a vis the "host society". This, in turn, enabled them to have the support of certain Milanese organizations that was also crucial to the success of some of their claims (16). This process in part also explains the tendency, noted in chapter 5, to perform marriages and baptisms in their own "ethnic institutions", as a way of reinforcing loyalty to the group whose benefits they share (cf. Conen 1981).

In order to be part of the group, one need not be a "pure" Eritrean, as Lemlem's case (born in Tigray and spending most of her life in Addis) shows. But the price to pay is that people like Lemlem or Ruth (also from Tigray) have to support, willy nilly, Eritrean nationalism because of the Front's presence in the Community. For example Ruth resented very much the fact that part of the membership fee to the Community (about £10) was going to the liberated areas of Eritrea and nothing to Tigray, where her eldest son was fighting with the TPLF. Also, non Tigrinya-speaking Eritreans or Ethiopians, had to adjust to the ethnic and linguistic dominance of Tigrinya in the community. For example Tolde, a Bilen Eritrean (cf. chapter 4), lamented Tigrinya chauvinism within the Community, in spite of pan-Eritrean nationalism and Berhane, a young Eritrean born in Addis and whose mother tongue was Amharic, although he did know some Tigrinya, had to improve it much more in order not to be discriminated against (cf. chapter 5).

Thus the Eritreans, using their "ethnic resources", are able to adopt a "usurpatory cultural strategy" as a group, especially in the field of social reproduction. The next section will show that the situation for Egyptians is rather different.

7.2 Egyptian cultural strategies and ethnic politics

Chapter 4 has shown that the Egyptians are a relatively large group (ca. 12,000) with a very strong male predominance and an age-structure concentrated in the working age (20-39).

Irregular employment in the catering sector is paramount. In spite of this there also seems to be a small group of entrepreneurs, some of whom are linked to the Egyptian consulate. In terms of housing they tend to fall within the general pattern of other immigrant groups, who usually live in precarious tenancies or in dormitories. In chapter 5, a lack of attendance at the main institution that could perform the role of an "ethnic institution" for the Egyptians (even though it is not limited to them), i.e. the Muslim Centre, was further noted. An explanation in terms of the fundamentalist religious identity of the Centre versus the modernist one of most Egyptians in Milan, was put forward. Furthermore a general lack of "ethnic" support network and organization has been also remarked, in spite of an attempt to create a Community. The former point in part also explained the tendency of Egyptians to attend local voluntary organizations that gave temporary support, rather than helping with long-term integration, as shown in chapter 6.

This section will suggest explanations for this relative "lack of ethnicity" less in cultural terms and more in terms of the resources that can be drawn from the host society and in terms of the power of mobilization that potential leaders have on the Milanese Egyptian population. This section also analyzes how intermarriage with Italian women may not only be due to the relative "scarcity" of Egyptian women in Milan (cf. chapter 5), but may also be a strategy to counter the above deficiencies. As Egyptians lack "ethnic resources", their "cultural strategy", will not involve stressing "ethnicity", but rather concealing it (17).

The Muslim Centre

Turning to the Muslim Centre, the first major handicap that prevents it from drawing resources from the "host society", is that it lacks an ideological matrix that fits with the dominant cultural discourse of the latter, as opposed to the Front or Father Yohannes' church. This is paradoxical in a way, as the Centre includes leaders who are Italian. But these individuals have become Muslim precisely as a result of their dissatisfaction with the "materialist" values of western societies like Italy. The alternative identity they have turned to, fundamentalist Sunni Islam, is one that is foreign to Italian culture (cf. chapter 3). This does not mean that Italian society is necessarily hostile to all Arabs or Muslims, but there would have to be factors other than religion to draw sympathy. For example the nationalist Palestinian struggle against "zionism" enjoys some support from various left-wing organizations in Italy. But Islamic religious fundamentalism, rather than "Third Worldist" nationalism, is the ideological cement of the Centre. This religious discourse is foreign to the main cultural features of Italian society, dominated by Catholicism, marxism and liberalism. The fundamentalist view of Sunni Islam that the Centre expounds, is negatively perceived by those non-Muslim Italians who get in touch with it. For example Don Mario (cf. chapter 5) told me that although he was very interested in Islam, held no views of Christian superiority, attended some events at the Centre and knew Abubakr, he felt that "the atmosphere there is too heavy: they stand for a religious

sectarianism that I have always fought against, also within the Church".

The leaders of the Centre therefore lack a common cultural terrain that might facilitate the establishment of political links with the "host society" in order to further their interests. An example of this is the fact that the Centre had not yet been able to build a mosque in Milan, which it had been struggling to get for the past four years or so. The leadership of the Centre and other Milanese Muslims felt that it is high time that Milan had a purpose-built mosque, instead of the present basement, where the faithful could pray. The Centre has managed to secure financing for the project from the Kuwaitian consulate (18). But the request to get permission for the construction from the planning authorities was met with a continuous series of obstacles and refusals. However, in April 1984 the local authorities finally decided to grant some land upon which to build a mosque, as the July issue of the Messaggero dell' Islam (the Centre's monthly bulletin) triumphantly announced. But in Autumn Abubakr told me that the project had come to another stop because the authorities were prepared only to lend the land for the mosque, which, according to Islamic law, should be owned by Muslims. In Spring 1985 the situation evolved again and this time the authorities were prepared to sell the land at the exorbitant price of around one million pounds, while the Centre claimed not to be able to afford this price, advocating instead a heavily reduced one or a donation. Between Autumn 1985 and Spring 1986 the whole project was

again stopped by pressure from the local population and external events which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Although this is how the situation stands at the moment, the outcome of the controversy is not predetermined, but will be the result of the negotiations and struggle between the Centre and various forces of the "host society", like the local authorities and the local population. What it does mean, however, is that the Centre, because of its weaker political links, has less leverage than Father Yohannes or the Front. This might also be a reason that makes the Centre not such an "attractive" institution for many Egyptians. Also, from the point of view of cultural identity, the fact that it is still located in a basement might reinforce the feeling of religious sectarian parochialism, that puts off many Egyptians from attending it. A purpose-built mosque, instead, as an architectural symbol of Islamic universalism, a visible sign of their presence and a centre of social life (Gilsenan 1983, p.194), may be more "attractive". However some Egyptians told me that even with a mosque, they would not be interested in coming "as it would be like going to church in Mecca", as one put it.

This might seem to contradict a claim made in chapter 5 that it is the universalism of Islam that makes the Centre an "interethnic" institution and therefore not an Egyptian one. Although the character of a religion in itself is not a determinant factor, it is still an important one, depending on whether it is universal or ethnically specific (as, to a certain extent, Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity is). It may be

objected that Islam is not necessarily antithetic to "ethnicity", as the case of the Hausa in Ibadan, adhering to the Muslim Tijanyya Order, shows. But while in this case there is a specific sect with theological and ritual differences from orthodox Islam (cf. Cohen 1969), in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood to which the Centre's leadership belongs, there is only a sectarian organization, but a universal and orthodox (even if fundamentalist) theology, ritual and membership. But even more important is the fact that in the case of the Hausa, the religious sect is controlled by powerful members of the group, which exclude non-Hausas from membership, while in the case of the Centre, the leadership does not belong to any single group, but is mainly Italian or Jordanian, but not Egyptian in any case. This means that the Centre is not the focus of socialization and articulation of interests of a single ethnic group, but can still perform this function for those who are members and thus be an "interethnic institution". The lack of political links with the "host society", however, suggest that this function might not be the same as that of Father Yohannes' church or the Front in the relationship with the "host society", but more an internal articulation of trade. This seems to be supported by some evidence, in that at least three of the Italians who I interviewed there, were merchants.

The Egyptian Community

The fact that there is no religious institution performing the function of an "ethnic institution" and providing leadership, does not mean that others could not exist, in

other spheres of their social life. However chapter 5 has argued that there is no other institution, comparable to the Muslim Centre that could perform such functions. However it will be remembered from chapter 5 that a group of influential Egyptians more or less all linked to the consulate tried to set up an "Egyptian Community". The "Community", which was finally constituted in November 1985, includes a couple of owners of import-export enterprises; Ismail, who owns a physiotherapy gym (cf. chapters 4 and 5); and a teacher of Arabic in a state school who is also an officer of the consulate.

This attempt to constitute a "Community", has also to be related to a proposal from the Milanese municipality to create a "Council of Migrants" representing the various local voluntary associations and "migrant communities" in Milan, to be able to discuss with the local authorities ways to improve their situation (cf. Taub et al. 1977). This could have been an opportunity for groups like the Egyptians to have their voice heard by the local authorities, even if they lacked links with the "host society". But the problem that emerged at a meeting on this topic held at the Volta school in March 1986, in which representatives of the various local associations and many foreign migrants were present, was the question of who were to be the representatives of those migrant groups that did not have a clear organization. This was the case of the Egyptians, as opposed to the Eritreans, both of whom were present at the meeting. When it was pointed out to the Egyptians present at the meeting by a member of CISL, that a few months earlier an "Egyptian Community" had

been constituted by the people mentioned above, most Egyptians there seemed totally unaware of this. They remarked "how are we going to be sure that they are going to represent the interests of the 90% of Egyptians who work in restaurants?" (see chapter 5 above).

The problem is therefore that these potential "community builders", lack the legitimacy for an acknowledgment of their leadership, as there is no focus of socialization where it could be transacted, like Father Yohannes' church or the Front festivals. In this respect the consulate, which might be a focus of aggregation of power, cannot be one of socialization. Also their role does not have a "traditional" legitimacy by reference to the country of origin, like the orthodox priest or liberation fighter for the Eritreans, even if there is a tradition of urban patrons in Cairo (cf. El Messri 1977). On the other hand, the lack of a centre and of legitimacy where power vis a vis the community can be transacted is related to the lack of links and resources they can mobilize from the "host society". Moreover, as noted in chapter 5, Egyptians deeply feel the class divisions cutting across their society, not only in Egypt, but also in Milan, as Mohammed (cf. chapters 4 and 5) noted: "I would never socialize with a peasant from upper Egypt". The founders of the Egyptian Community therefore lack the legitimation and mobilization of power to be "legitimate leaders" besides, to a great extent, lacking the political links enjoyed by the Eritrean ones. In summary both the Muslim Centre and the Egyptian Community, for different reasons, do not articulate

and promote the interests of the Egyptians and do not therefore constitute "ethnic institutions".

Intermarriage

How do Egyptians manage to counter these relative disadvantages? The relative lack of "cultural resources" and political links and the failure to articulate and mobilize the group are disadvantages that occur at the level of the group and prevent the promotion of collective interests. But the interests of the individuals that make up the group, such as access to better employment, housing, etc., may still be pursued by trying to conceal "differences" between them as individuals and the "host society", rather than by underlining group identity. One of the main avenues of this strategy is intermarriage. Marrying an Italian citizen involves acquiring Italian citizenship after three years (if no legal separation has occurred in the meantime), but rights of unlimited sojourn and rights to seek any kind of job, are acquired immediately. In chapter 5 it has already been hinted that this occurrence is rather frequent for the Egyptians who, being a predominantly male group, have a high rate of males marrying Italian women. It will also be remembered that for a marriage to be recognized as valid by the Italian state, it has to be performed by an authorized minister of a "recognized cult" (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, but not Muslim) or in the Municipality. Therefore for a marriage between a Muslim Egyptian and an Italian citizen to be recognized by the Italian state, it has to be performed in the Municipality and would be recorded in the "civil" section. At any rate, the marriages celebrated at the Muslim

Centre,' are very few compared to those celebrated in the Municipality. Very few people who marry in the Municipality marry again, religiously, in the Centre.

As the Municipality does not publish any statistics concerning marriages broken down by nationalities and therefore every single marriage had to be reviewed in order to get some data, I was able to do so only for the year 1985, which involved examining over 6,000 marriage certificates. Of the 108 civil marriages I recorded involving at least one citizen from a non-Western country, 34 (or 31% of the total) involved an Egyptian citizen, of which 28 (26% of the total) were between an Egyptian male and an Italian female. No other single group approached these percentages. Moreover while the average year of birth of the Egyptian males was 1955, that of the Italian females was 1950. Breaking down the figure further, of the 13 cases in which the Egyptian men were younger than the Italian women, the respective years of birth were 1953 and 1943. Moreover, two marriages were recorded between Italian men and Egyptian women and one between an Egyptian man and a British woman, both cases involving the same acquisition of rights, except for Italian nationality in the latter. Not a single case was found where both partners were of Egyptian nationality. Assuming that similar figures applied also in at least the two preceeding years and that the trend will continue to grow, given the relatively recent nature of Egyptian immigration, it can be concluded that intermarriage for the Egyptians is not just a sporadic occurrence, but a significant trend, enhancing their social and legal position in Italian society. Although the

benefits resulting from these marriages may not be the only reasons for their occurrence, this is in part confirmed by the fact that many of these marriages go against the social convention in Italy that the wife should be younger than the husband. It can be speculated that from the point of view of Italian women, these marriages occur after a divorce (as in the case of Zayed's wife, cf. chapters 4 and 5) or are a way of avoiding celibacy. Moreover this pattern for the Egyptians stands in sharp contrast with that of the Eritreans, for whom marriages in the "ethnic institution" is more common than that in the Municipality and for whom only 3 out of 7 of those celebrated in the Municipality were between Italian males and "Ethiopian" females, the rest being among "Ethiopians".

In chapter 5 it was shown that many single Egyptians expressed the desire to marry Italian women and saw no religious "obstacles" to this. In terms of identity, does this mean that the Egyptians are more "assimilated" than, for example, the Eritreans? It should be remembered that Islamic law allows polygamy up to four wives and that this is still tolerated in Egypt, even if with some amendments that give some extra rights to the wives (cf. chapter 2). This could mean that a marriage with an Italian woman could be conceived of as a temporary strategy to enhance life chances in Italy while at the same time having a Muslim wife in Egypt or marrying one subsequently without having to divorce the Italian one. But it seems that polygamy is not common among the educated urban middle classes from which most of the Egyptian migrants in Milan come and would go against

Italian law. None of my informants expressed these intentions. A more likely pattern would be to ask for a divorce after a few years of marriage and go back to Egypt and marry again or acquire Italian nationality and stay in Italy (19). But most Egyptians I interviewed expressed the desire to stay in Italy if they could improve the situation and everybody said that marrying an Italian woman would be one such instance. Finally even though every Egyptian remarked that they had no religious problems in marrying a Christian woman and that the children would be brought up in a "pluralistic" religious environment and would be able to choose between the two religions when adult, for the Islamic law the children of such marriages are Muslim by right. Thus marrying a non-Muslim Italian woman does not necessarily mean giving up one's "ethnic" identity to acquire a new one, but it means that it cannot be stressed and used as a resource because there is no evidence that the Italian women who marry them want to convert later. It has at least to be "played down" in the new context, as it is doubtful whether marrying a non-Muslim and non-Arab is socially approved in the Arab world.

Crime

Intermarriage may not be the only strategy carried out by Egyptians to enhance their situation in Milan. Various forms of criminal activity may also be among them. This has been a common pattern among immigrants in the USA to counter the structural disadvantages deriving from their position as latecomers in American society (cf. Hannerz 1974). Moreover concepts such as "criminality", "cultural pathology" and

"social" disorganization" often have racist implications (cf. Gilroy 1982, Lawrence 1982b, Jackson 1984). Given these warnings, the occurrence of crime among Egyptians in Milan can now be examined and compared with that of the Eritreans. To begin with, no accurate and reliable data could be gathered, given that the topic of "foreign criminality" has become a very "hot" issue, especially in connection with terrorism (cf. chapter 8).

The only data that could be collected were from the Milanese page of a national conservative newspaper (il Giornale) which reported many instances of "ethnic crime" and through a Ministerial publication. Even if these sources may not provide an impartial picture of the situation, they give a general idea. From September 1984 to March 1986 the paper reported the arrest of 31 persons from Third World countries, of whom 19 were from Egypt, 10 from Tunisia, 1 from Morocco and 1 from "Ethiopia". Of the 19 Egyptians, 15 were arrested for crimes related to drug dealing. Among the Tunisians the most common offence was theft (7 out of 10). It was interesting that the only "Ethiopian" arrested was caught with some of the above Egyptians and had a Muslim surname. These data suggest that the occurrence of crime among the Egyptians might not just be sporadic, but a form of "ethnic enterprise", mainly related to drugs, although probably practiced by a small minority of the group. On the other hand it seems to be virtually absent from the Eritrean group. This pattern is confirmed by data from the Ministry of Justice (20), although confined to the national level. They reported that as of June 15, 1985 there were 3,945 foreign prisoners

in Italy among whom the main categories of offence were "against property" (i.e. theft) = 1,489 (37% of the total) and "against other laws" (mainly drugs) = 1,129 (28% of total). Table 7.1 reports foreign prisoners in Italy, by nationality and offence.

These data seem to confirm the Milanese ones, identifying Egyptians and Tunisians as the main "foreigners" involved in illicit activities, apart from the "Yugoslavs". The problem is that the national distribution and size of the above population may not be consistent with the Milanese one. Thus although in Milan Egyptians outnumber Tunisians, it may be that at the national level this is not so, at least not in such a marked way. Or it may be that the high rate of Tunisian crime may come from areas other than Milan where there is a greater concentration, as in Sicily, for example. At any rate the percentage of offenders for "Ethiopians" is much lower than for either Tunisians or Egyptians, respectively one fourteenth and one eighth. Even taking into account the fact that the Egyptian population is larger than the "Ethiopian" one also at the national level and assuming that the Milanese ratio of about four to one applies also at the national level, the figure for Egyptians would still be more than double. Finally, the presence of some systematic forms of "ethnic crime" among the Egyptians, was confirmed by interviews with Egyptians, like Zayed (cf. chapters 4 and 5) who remarked that many of his compatriots who come with little money to Italy "get involved with bad people in the drugs business". Also among Eritreans Egyptians have the "reputation" of being thieves and drug dealers. (cf. the next

Table 7.1 Foreign prisoners in Italy (May 31, 1985)

Yugoslavia (mainly Gypsies).	535	=	14.9%
Tunisia.....	451	=	12.6%
Egypt.....	280	=	7.8%
Morocco.....	183	=	5.1%
Algeria.....	149	=	4.1%
Nigeria.....	136	=	3.8%
France.....	130	=	3.6%
Germany (BRD).....	113	=	3.1%
Chile.....	92	=	2.5%
Switzerland.....	79	=	2.2%
Lebanon.....	67	=	1.8%
Syria.....	63	=	1.7%
Turkey.....	63	=	1.7%
Colombia.....	61	=	1.7%
Austria.....	52	=	1.4%
India.....	50	=	1.3%
Ghana.....	49	=	1.3%
Argentina.....	47	=	1.3%
Iran.....	43	=	1.2%
Belgium.....	38	=	1.0%
Sri Lanka.....	37	=	1.0%
Spain.....	37	=	1.0%
Albania.....	34	=	0.9%
Ethiopia.....	32	=	0.8%
Other 60 nationalities.....	616	=	17.2%
Total.....	3,572	=	100.0%

Source: Ministry of Grace and Justice (1985)

chapter). No moral judgment is implied here, nor any suggestion that "crime" among the Egyptians is "abnormally high". What is suggested, is that there may be a more significant presence of "crime" among the Egyptians than among the Eritreans, as another ethnic strategy to counter the relative lack of "ethnic resources" and of political leadership and organization, enjoyed to a greater extent by the latter group.

7.3 Conclusion

In spite of the fact that they are both in a similar class position with respect to relations of production, i.e. in the lower, unprotected tertiary sector - albeit in different economic niches - the two groups in consideration employ very different strategies to counter their situation of economic and legal subordination. Thus although it is important to characterize their class situation as migrant labour (cf. Miles 1982), it is insufficient to analyze their behaviour in the present context. A political perspective based on the strategies employed by the groups to exploit the available opportunities to enhance their position should also be taken into account, even if within the "exclusionary" constraints of the "host society" (cf. chapter 8). This situation can be characterized as one of "usurpation", following Parkin's (1979) notion of "social closure". In this process "ethnic resources" (Wallman 1979) are important factors defining the kinds of links with the "host society" that can be utilized to their advantage as well as providing a framework for internal organization, mobilization and decision making.

Often 'certain aspects of the group's identity that are more suitable to pursue collective interests, are emphasized, even if "the cultural" is not freely constructable, but is constrained by the "identity options" that allow individuals to recognize their position as members of the group. When there are powerful individuals within the group who can articulate these elements at the group level to promote the group's interests these become "cultural strategies", usually stressing the group's distinctiveness (Cohen 1969, 1974a, 1974b).

This is, to a certain extent, the case of the Eritreans who, through the cultural discourses of Christianity and "radicalism" shared with the "host society" and the reproach of the colonial links, are able to engage in a collective "usurpatory strategy" in the fields of legal rights, housing, education, among others. In this the role of powerful "patron/brokers" is crucial, manipulating them to some extent and presenting a certain version of the group's identity through their double role as group leaders and as mediators with the "host society". This was done through the presentation of the Eritreans towards the "host society" at times as a "Catholic" group, and at times as an oppressed national minority, part of the Third World's liberation struggles. They can thus both mobilize the group's identity and utilize their political links with certain sections of the Milanese society. The latter were also crucial in successfully ending certain struggles and claims, as in the field of housing. The main difference with Cohen's model of the Hausa lies in the fact that for them a "cultural

strategy" involved mainly the internal articulation of interaction and power to control a trading network, while in the Eritrean case it is to manipulate a political network of links with the "host society". But when "cultural resources" and "patron/brokers" are not available and class divisions override "ethnic solidarity", as in the Egyptian case, a "cultural strategy" might be more individualistic, "playing down", rather than emphasizing, the group's identity. This was achieved through a self-presentation as "lay" persons sharing a common "Mediterraneanness" with Italians. The outcomes of these strategies ranged from intermarriage to organized crime.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

- (1) For a similar argument applied to British bureaucracy, cf. Flett (1979).
- (2) For a similar pattern of Asian "ethnic brokers" in Britain, cf. Brooks and Singh (1979).
- (3) The argument of the social construction of employment in terms of gender is developed, among others, by Carby (1982).
- (4) This group is slightly to the left of the PCI, but is not formalized into a party.
- (5) Cf. chapter 2 for a brief outline of the TPLF and chapters 4 and 5 for an introduction to some of the characters mentioned here.
- (6) The leaflet, called "The sole truth and only solution", was issued by the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (i.e. the Derg) in 1985.
- (7) The fact that a good deal of them were young people has some implications for the concept of "second generation identity" which will be discussed in the next chapter.
- (8) One of the informants mentioned in chapters 4 and 5.
- (9) One of the EPLF's "mass organizations".
- (10) The radical priest mentioned in chapter 6.
- (11) Cf. chapter 3 for the legislation and chapter 6 for the situation of political refugees in Milan.
- (12) On this topic cf. Boffi et al. (1972).
- (13) SUNIA is the Tenants Union linked to the Communist Trade Union, CGIL, which also supports the Eritreans, but less actively than SICET.
- (14) la Repubblica, August 22, 1985 and September 5, 1985.
- (15) Data from the Municipality could not be collected, for this is considered a "hot issue" (cf. chapter 8).
- (16) Cf. Susser (1982) for a similar argument regarding the struggle of the American urban poor.
- (17) This point therefore partly contradicts Cohen's model.
- (18) The relationship between what Humphreys (1981) would define as a "fundamentalist state" and a fundamentalist sect like the Muslim Brotherhood, seems to be at times one of cooperation and at times one of conflict.
- (19) It is almost impossible to check how many of those Egyptians who married in Milan actually went back to Egypt.

(20) Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia "The Prison in Italy: History, Development, Perspectives" 7th U.N. Congress on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders.

CHAPTER 8: RACISM, ETHNIC RELATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

This chapter examines how the "host society" reacts, in terms of social relations and ideological stereotypes, to the presence of these immigrant groups and if there is a different attitude towards the two groups under consideration. The particular forms that racist ideology and "exclusionary" discrimination take in the Milanese context will be assessed. Secondly it briefly examines how the discriminatory practices of the "host society" are felt by individuals from the two groups and if this entails a change of attitude towards Italian society and, more importantly, if a transformation of their "ethnic identity" is beginning to emerge. In this respect the concept of "second generation identity" will be assessed. Finally it looks briefly at the attitudes and perceptions members of the two groups have towards each other.

8.1 Racist ideologies and discriminatory practices

In chapter 1 it was argued that racism, as a negative ideology attributed to an out-group, takes different forms in different historical and social circumstances, being at times constructed in biological terms with notions of racial inferiority, and at times in cultural ones with notions of "pathological culture", "disreputable lifestyle" and "criminality" (cf. C.C.C.S. 1982, Miles 1982). The economic context is crucial in all cases. Secondly, one should distinguish between racism at the level of ideas and at the

level of social practice, as the ideologies that "inform" these practices might have arisen in different circumstances (cf. Miles 1982). Thirdly, concerning the racist ideological legacy in Italy, it was argued that although a biologically constructed racist discourse was not prominent, there are some, albeit weak, sets of stereotypes against Muslims and Islam, Abyssinians and southern Italians, although the latter are of a different nature and occur in a different context. Finally in chapters 3 and 4 it has been argued that the system of regulations concerning foreign immigration to Italy pushes the migrants to become clandestine workers in the lower tertiary sector and that therefore there is little competition between migrant workers and "native" ones in terms of employment.

In this context foreign migrants are not unionized and have not acquired a common class consciousness with the native working class, unlike what happened with migrants from southern Italy (cf. Ascoli 1979, p. 148). This is because to a large extent they did not compete with the Italian working class over employment having never entered the industrial manufacturing sector and because the jobs they perform are to a large extent not sought after by Italians (cf. chapter 3). In the Italian and Milanese case in particular there are no structural preconditions for the emergence of racism in the economic, productive sphere. This also means, paradoxically, that the trade unions, contrary to what happens in other countries, do not have a negative attitude towards the immigrants, but support in part their claims (cf. chapters 3 and 6).

While this is the attitude of the unions (their attitude in specific situations will be examined below), little data have been found concerning the attitude of the rank and file of the working class itself. However, perhaps ignorance (in the sense of not caring) is the best way of describing their attitude, since I never heard any reports of antagonism to the unions' position nor, except in sporadic cases (like the Committee for the Eritreans), of active support, such as mobilization to defend their rights. Their attitude might change in the future, either if the immigrants, after having acquired some legal rights, gain access to jobs for which there is competition from the local population or, in case of a deep economic recession and radical change in the nature of the Italian welfare state (with its system of assistenzialismo). In this case they will start looking for employment in those sectors, at present occupied to a certain extent by the migrants, for which there is still shortage of "native" labour.

On the other hand certain manifestations of racism in the field of employment occur not so much in relation to the competition between migrants and "natives" over employment, but to the low status of the jobs performed by the migrants. In an Eritrean case, Ruth (cf. chapter 4) told me that once, as she was taken to a holiday resort by the family for whom she was working as a maid and complained about the place she was forced to live, she was answered: "shut up, you slave bitch". The "imagery" used in this instance seems to be drawn from the colonial legacy. Another source of tension is when

there are arguments between the migrant-worker and the employer over the social security of the job. For instance an Egyptian who worked for a porters' cooperative who tried to resist his sacking after an illness, was told: "you bastard Egyptian I'll get you thrown out of Italy".

If there are few racist tensions in the area of employment, they may be emerging in other areas of social relations. These are important to determine since, in popular discourse and "common sense" ideology, one often hears that: "Italians are not racist by nature". "There has never been antisemitism in Italy". "We were the only 'good' colonial power that treated the indigenous well". While the first claim does contain at least some elements of truth (cf. chapter 3), the last one is certainly wrong (cf. Del Boca 1985, Mazrui and Tidy 1984). Five areas of social relations in which racist tensions are beginning to emerge can be identified. Coupled with the ideological legacy, they define the ideological discourse of "racism" (not necessarily couched in the biological language of "race"). They are: housing, criminality, terrorism, places of socialization and, in specific instances, religion. Some of them are interrelated.

Housing

The previous chapter examined how the Eritreans have access to public housing. In the past couple of years, pressure on access to public housing from "indigenous" Milanese people has also risen since quite a few private tenancies, for years safeguarded by the Italian equivalent of the "Fair Rent" policy, have been threatened with eviction, some of which

have been actually carried out. Moreover as the housing market, both private and public, is quite frozen and those who have access to housing in favourable conditions (owners, public or private tenants with "Fair Rent") tend to keep it and to "pass it on" to their children, there is pressure from people who are not able to buy, to have access to public housing. The process of rehousing the Eritreans in Municipality-owned public housing, which took place in the last couple of years, has not yet come to the attention of the general public and the media have not (yet) made an issue of it, perhaps also because of its relatively small dimensions, compared to the size of the Milanese housing problem. But there are a few hints of what the reaction might be.

The previous chapter also described an incident concerning the squatters of one casa occupata (among whom were many Eritreans), who were evicted and subsequently rehoused in Municipality-owned public housing and that this incident received attention in two small articles of the local page of a national newspaper (1). A few days later, the Municipal councillors of the MSI party (neofascist), accused a councillor of the ruling coalition responsible for public housing, of giving Municipality-owned flats to "illegal Eritreans" at the expense of Italian families (2). The Tenants' Unions, in a leaflet of October 9, 1985, condemned the MSI's intervention as indicative of its "racist attitude ... and inhuman attempt to antagonize, on the level of fundamental needs like housing, Italian workers to ... Eritrean workers". The MSI might be considered relatively

marginal in Italian politics and in terms of popular support, but it is probable that its attitude on this question would have a larger support than its percentage of votes, should this turn into a "hot issue". Another instance of the fear of what might happen "if the lid was opened" is that, when I asked a Municipality officer, with the backing of a DC councillor, if he could give me some data on public housing given to foreign migrants, he was most elusive, gave me a figure that was less than one third of the estimated real one, and concluded that I should not pursue the issue any further "since it is not an appropriate moment". It might be concluded that, although at the time being there is no overt conflict between Milanese and Eritreans over housing which may give rise to racist attitudes and practices, this might prove to be a fertile ground for future developments.

Criminality

"Criminality" is an important area of racist attitudes towards "coloured migrants" (cf. chapter 1). Although it is true that the migrants' "criminality" is exaggerated, it is also true that on the whole their rate may well be higher than that of the local population (and even this might not always be the case), but not as a result of "pathological" cultures but as a fairly common "strategy" to counter the lack of resources available to newly arrived migrant groups, with important differences among them (cf. the previous chapter). An example of the criminalization of migrants in Milan carried out by the media, is an article from the Milanese page of il Giornale, September 29, 1985. The article's headline was "Sprawl of 'coloured' criminality

fuelled by clandestine immigrants" and went on to say that "In Milan the unsolved question of clandestines ... is becoming a serious problem of public order ...". The article (and other similar ones) contains the "classic" features of the emergence of a racist discourse centred around the criminalization of migrants: the alarmist apprehension of "floods" or "invasions" of "coloured" immigrants; the indiscriminate and unproblematic association between the migrants and the rise of criminality and the reference to the notion of "public order" (cf. Solomos et al. 1982, Lawrence 1982a, 1982b, Gilroy 1982) (3). Although the tradition of internal criminality (Mafia and the like) prevents the total imputation of the phenomenon of criminality to the migrants (who, when involved in it, would often depend on Italian "organizations"), in the popular discourse one starts to hear remarks like: "things are not the same since they came", or "it became more dangerous to walk in the streets". An old lady who had her house broken into from a small window in the roof remarked: "in order to be so agile to break in from that point, it must have been one of those coloured immigrants".

Terrorism

Another area of development of racist attitudes towards the migrants, is the association between "clandestine" immigrants and terrorism. This process was triggered by some events that hit the news at the end of 1985. These events included: the hijack of the Achille Lauro cruiser in the Autumn of 1985 by a faction of the PLO and the massacre of 13 people at Rome's airport, probably carried out by the Abu Nidal group in December of the same year (4). Especially after the second

event the media started conveying to the public the image of an association between terrorist events and the presence of "clandestines" in Italy. For example the prestigious il Corriere della Sera, in the Milanese page of January 4, 1986, a few days after the massacre at the airport wrote: "After the dramatic event of Fumicino (Rome's airport), also in Lombardy the problem of clandestines comes up again". Or il Giornale (December 28, 1985): "The hypotheses on the massacre link together: irregular foreigners in Italy are 800,000, people are calling for measures". Although in most articles the causal link between "clandestines" and terrorism was not made explicit, the association between the two was conveyed to public opinion. What was striking about the majority of these articles was that they never mentioned the fact that it was very unlikely that highly trained terrorists, provided with false passports, could come from the common milieu of "illegal" dishwashers or maids, and secondly the generalizing character of the association with all types of immigrant groups, even if very remotely (like the Eritreans) or not related at all (like, say the Salvadoreans) to the Middle-Eastern politics in question. This is important for the change in the attitude towards life in Italy, of the two migrant groups under consideration (cf. the following sections).

The above events proved to be a watershed in the relationship between the migrants and Italian people in general. Subsequent to them, the media, and in particular the newspapers which had previously remained virtually silent on the question of the "new" foreign immigration, released a

"flood" of articles on the question, with various degrees of analysis and sympathy. For many Italians who had not acknowledged, at least consciously, this "new" presence in their country, the realization came in conjunction with these events. As a response to this, the Minister of Internal Affairs released a statement that "a law proposal" containing stricter regulations on the question of foreign immigration, had been prepared. The media reported this (e.g. il Corriere della Sera January 4, 1986) (5) and it might have satisfied public opinion. Upon closer scrutiny, however, this proposal did not change the substance of the existing regulations, just changing them from administrative norms to law, maybe to preserve the benefits to the labour market deriving from the presence of the "clandestines", as suggested in previous chapters. Only slightly tougher measures for migrants or their employers breaking the rules were envisaged. Although some expulsions were carried out in the weeks following the massacre (cf. la Repubblica, January 5, 1986), this might have been for the use of the media and public opinion and there is no evidence that a systematic policy of forced repatriation followed.

The criminalization of the immigrants in conjunction with these terrorist events might be due to the need "to make sense", to use Solomos's et al. (1982) expression, of a crisis in the field of foreign policy that occurred quite independently from the presence of the "clandestine" immigrants. At the level of social interaction, many more instances of "racist incidents" happened, or at least were reported. In buses, or on walls, sentences like:

"Palestinians go home", "Arabs out of Italy", or "Marocchini out of Rome" (cf. la Repubblica January 4, 1986 and il Manifesto January 18, 1986) were more or less directly related to the above incidents. It is important to point out, however, that while it is more or less clear who is to be considered, in popular discourse, a "Palestinian", this is less true of "Arabs" and even more of "Marocchini" (Moroccans), as will be shown below. On the other hand it is more difficult to discern whether the rise in reports of sackings of "clandestine" workers (6) was due to fear of employing "potential terrorists" or of the tougher sanctions of the new law proposal, whether the above events just triggered latent feelings, or if it was just due to the greater attention given by the media to these issues. As a final example of the great tension surrounding these issues, it may be mentioned that when I went to the Questura (Police headquarters) to ask for some data about the number and nationality of foreign prisoners in Milan, stating that I was a student, before I could even finish the sentence I was taken to a room where my identity card was requested, my criminal record checked on a computer and finally I was told: "we cannot release this delicate information".

Religion

Religion, and in particular Islam, might be another area for the development of racist attitudes and feelings. In chapter 3 it was argued that traditionally Islam has been negatively perceived in Italy, but the lack of a consistent Muslim population in modern times in Italy prevented its practical expression. In the previous chapter some of the difficulties

that the Muslim Centre encountered in carrying out its project of building a mosque in Milan have been outlined. Here it can be added that at the beginning of 1985, a committee of residents in the area where the mosque should have been built was formed in opposition to the project. The leader of the committee put forward "technical" planning reasons for this opposition, stating that it would have created traffic problems, given that it would have been situated near the football stadium and race course and suggested choosing a more peripheral and quiet site. In reality the area did not seem to have particular disadvantages from the point of view of traffic since, although it was true that it was near the stadium and the race course, it was also already quite peripheral and with rather wide streets. Other areas in Milan would not have been more or less suitable. More importantly, it was a very residential upper-middle class area, with attractive villas with gardens and the residents feared that a mosque would have attracted people with "disreputable lifestyles", who would moreover be Muslims (cf. Fig 4.2). This was confirmed by an interview with the parish priest of a church close to the site who was disturbed by the project. He told me that he had nothing against the construction of "another temple for the worship of God" (meaning that he was not anti-Muslim), but that he was afraid of the social life this would have brought about, like "drug dealing". He was aware of the committee of residents against the mosque and acknowledged that he had had pressures from them to join and to take a stance against the project, but he hastened to add that he never formally joined the committee and did not lend

the premises of the church for its meetings. However he conceded that he agreed with its motivations. In the end he said that the police authorities stopped the project anyhow since, after the terrorist incidents, it "became dangerous to build a mosque in an area with many consular residences". This episode shows how the issue of "terrorism" can be used by the "natives" as an excuse to avoid the contact with what are perceived as "disreputable" lifestyles and an "alien" religion.

Places of socialization

A final area of development of racist attitudes and practices is that of places of socialization, like bars and restaurants. This seems to happen where there is a certain degree of "ethnic mix" between the migrants and the "natives" as in certain bars and restaurants which are monopolized by specific ethnic groups, the Eritreans in particular, where only the "sympathetic" Italians go there. In this case however, when there is a concentration of "ethnic" bars and restaurants in a specific area, like in area 3 where there are three Eritrean restaurants and two bars (8), the whole area acquires a "bad" reputation. In that specific instance for example, where some "old Milanese", usually lower-middle class, live, I heard statements like: "the area is not like it used to be", "it became more dangerous around here", etc. In the first case (that of "ethnically mixed" bars, etc.) I witnessed two examples. I used to go very often with a group of young immigrants (mainly Eritreans, but also some Somalis and Salvadoreans) to play table-football in a bar near the community centre where they attended a course (cf. the

following section). The bar was in a very central area with many offices and had a separate room where customers could play pool, table-tennis and table-football. Once I noticed that they stopped going and they told me they did so because the owner of the bar told them they should not come anymore. When I went to ask her explanation and if she had something to complain about, she answered that she did not. But she added: "I am a Christian and believe in God and therefore I am not racist. But I would like those boys not to come anymore, since they are putting off other customers from coming". As some of the boys kept on going, rightly arguing that they were not committing any offence, she threatened to call the police and they stopped going altogether.

Similarly I had a conversation with the owner of a bar attended by many Egyptians, in area 5, inhabited by quite a few Egyptians (cf. chapter 4 and Fig. 4.2). After having gone to that bar several times, I had the impression that "relations" between the migrants and the "natives" were quite "good", since I often saw them playing cards or bocchette together. After a while, I had the impression of a decrease in attendance by Egyptians and talked about it to the owner. He told me: "I am left-wing and I concerned myself with the situation of Third World immigrants for years. At the beginning things between Egyptians and Italian were alright, but then they started deteriorating as more and more of them came, among them people involved in rackets. It became impossible to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' people and after a while I was faced with an ultimatum by my Italian customers: 'either us or them'. So I told them they were not

well accepted in my bar anymore and their number drastically reduced". In both cases therefore discriminatory practices emerge against "the other" who is constructed in terms of "threatening" and "disreputable" lifestyles by members of the "host society", in the context of common places of socialization. This is reminiscent, to a certain extent, of the 1950s and 1960s with the immigration from the South, with the difference that in our case the greater cultural, social and structural distance, will probably lead to an increase in the segregation of places of socialization, as in the Eritrean case (9), rather than to an eventual integration which happened with southern Italians, in Milan at least.

Stereotypes

Do the racist practices and negative stereotypes examined above identify specific migrant groups or, on the contrary, do they apply more or less indiscriminately to each of them? This is important because one would expect the first case to be true, since the above events identify specific groups (e.g. housing-Eritreans; terrorism- Palestinians, Arabs) and because experience from other countries teaches that different migrant groups are associated with different sets of negative stereotypes (10). The process of racial categorization, however, does not necessarily obey the logic of "rationality", identifying precise causes and "causers", but follows the generalizing logic of "common sense", changing with the context (cf. Lawrence 1982a, Miles 1982). This is even truer in this case, with a substantial immigration that occurred only in the last five years or so. In the specific case of Eritreans and Egyptians, in spite of

rather 'obvious "phenotypical" differences (e.g. colour) (11), they are both subsumed under the same negative label of "Marocchini" (12). I have not been able to ascertain the origins of the usage of this term as a stereotype, but I was told by some old Italians that it dates from the Allied liberation of Italy in the Second World War, in which the French troops had a Moroccan brigade which, apparently, committed all sorts of despicable acts, that remained in the collective subconscious. Whatever the origin may be, the image this term nowadays conveys, is that of a poor Arab, with a wooden box, selling contraband watches, lighters and cigarettes and usually trying to cheat. With the recent arrival of the "new" immigrants, the term has widened to embrace not only all Arabs, but also all sorts of "black" Africans, for which it is used interchangeably with "Negro" (13). Many Eritreans told me they were addressed both as "Marocchini" and "Negri" and I witnessed a case of a young boy asking a young Eritrean: "are you a Marocchino?". This derogatory label, conveying many of the above negative images of "disreputable" lifestyles, "criminality", "terrorism" and possibly religion (i.e. Islam), is therefore applied irrespective of "phenotypical" differences and sociocultural ones, making the people it identifies (usually Arabs and Africans, but possibly also others) the object of the discriminatory attitudes that follow. One must agree with Miles (1982) that the process of racial categorization is a social construction that is not based exclusively on colour, but that changes ideological content according to the context in which it occurs.

The sphere of racism and social alliances

Looking at the socioeconomic context, it has been shown that the migrants enter the lower, "unprotected" tertiary sector of the Milanese economy. This, coupled with the sociocultural difference with the "host society", prevents the development of a common class consciousness that might help breaking down the perception of "ethnic difference". On the other hand, this also prevented, to a large extent, the emergence of racist practices and attitudes in the field of employment, when structural processes led to a competition for the relatively "protected" (in terms of social security) industrial jobs, like in France and in Britain in the early 1970s (14). Instead, in Milan at least, it seems that the structural context for the emergence of racist practices and attitudes, is the field of "social reproduction", to use a neomarxist term (15), including housing, places of socialization and religion and, learning from the British experience (cf. Rex and Tomlinson 1979), probably education, although it is too early to assess it, as it has only been a few years since young migrants started entering the Italian educational system.

However, the particular socioeconomic context of racism also means that not all the sections of the "host society" reacted in the same way. For example, after the above events, the Milanese section of the metallurgic trade unions (FLM), one of the most powerful, issued a leaflet denouncing "xenophobic events ... in our country ... that might become real and true racism against the Arabs, coming in the first instance from certain sections of the media, after the very serious events

of Fiumicino and Wien". The cardinal of Milan, regarded as close to the position of some of the "progressive Catholic" organizations mentioned before, in a speech delivered a few days after these incidents, expressed the fear that terrorist acts might lead to discrimination (il Giorno January 7, 1986). The various organizations dealing with the migrants described in the previous chapter held similar positions.

The next two sections examine whether the reaction of the host society to the presence of the "new" immigrants entails a change of perception and attitude towards it by the Eritreans and the Egyptians.

8.2 Attitudes towards the "host society" and "ethnic transformation" of Eritreans

Eritrean attitudes towards the "host society" and perceptions of racism

Eritreans choose Italy as a destination of their migration, largely because of colonial links and come to it if not as to a "second mothercountry", as a place where they would integrate more easily, "because Italy has strong cultural ties with Eritrea", as an Eritrean put it (cf. chapter 4). In this respect their attitude was similar to that of West Indians migrating to Great Britain in the 1950s (cf. Cashmore 1979). Also, one can recall Samuel's statement that "when Italians ask me how come you came here in Italy, I reply: by the same road on which you came to Eritrea". To the question of whether he planned to go back to his country if the situation improved, he answered: "we know where we are born,

but not where we are going to die", probably meaning that he could envisage settling permanently in Italy. If asked what they think of Italian people, Eritreans usually say things like: "Italians are good people". This might be interpreted as a "tactful" answer to an Italian interviewer, reproducing the idea Italians have about themselves ("being good-hearted", etc.). However there is some evidence that Eritreans, at least in the first stages of their migration, are well disposed towards Italians and Italy, towards which they feel a "special relationship". For example, in the civil New Year festival that the Front organizes (cf. chapter 5), people come from Germany to Milan, rather than vice versa. Patria told me that "Italy is the most logical place to hold such festivals as it is the European country we feel more attached to spiritually".

However they would often add: "but living conditions are very hard". Abraham once said that when he arrived at Milan's airport from Asmara, he was very glad to be in Italy. But when he saw the old casa occupata where he was going to live with his mother, he remarked: "My God, is this our home? It can't be! Then I haven't arrived in Milan!" This probably means that because of the historical links and the fact that, at least until the 1975 revolution, Italy was studied at school, expectations about the standards of life they would find there, were quite high. One of the first painful discoveries was the lack of legal rights (sojourn permit, work permit, etc.) and the constant fear that a police check could mean repatriation and in certain cases at least, imprisonment or even death in Ethiopia. The historical link

between Eritrea and Italy and the situation of famine and war in their country, make Eritreans resent the fact that they are not recognized as political refugees, thereby not enjoying any privileged status vis a vis other migrant groups. A member of the EPLF pointed out that the leader of MSI (neofascist party) was reported to have said that "Eritreans should be granted Italian passports upon their arrival at the border because of their contribution to the Italian army in the colonial period and Second World War".

This lack of recognition of their claim to a special status, the fact that migration was often more a necessity than a choice, the expectations about Italy and the greater politicization (therefore awareness of rights), explain why Eritreans regard their living conditions in Italy as worse than those in their country and denounce episodes of racism more than other migrant groups (Melotti et al. 1985, pp. 58-63). Also, being identified together with other "Marocchini", they resent the negative stereotypes that are associated with it. For example, they are often at pains to point out that they are "an honest community", as opposed to other ones, often referring to the Egyptians. This negative perception of their situation was greatly increased when, after the terrorist incidents, they were perceived by common people as "potential terrorists" just like other "Marocchini". For example an Eritrean interviewed by a journalist remarked: "I work sixteen hours a day. Can I be a terrorist?" (l'Unita' Jan 5, 1986). This implies that he perceived he could be identified as a "potential terrorist" as well. Father Yohannes blamed the media for having spread

the idea that all Third World immigrants are terrorists and that "because of a small group of terrorists, an honest and industrious community like the Eritrean one should be penalized". He added that the Ministry of the Interior was right in enforcing tougher regulations, but that Eritreans should be considered as political refugees. This non-recognition of the "particularity" of Eritreans, as opposed to other migrants, explains why, as Tedros said, citing the results of an internal survey, "more than racism we Eritreans feel indifference. At times we would even rather have active racism, that at least would be a sign of an acknowledgment of our presence and the conflict over the acquisition of rights. At the moment we are in a pre-racist stage".

What implications does this perception of exclusion from the "host society" have for the patterns of ethnic identity and ethnic politics identified in previous chapters? As argued before, the Eritrean migrants who arrive, at an adult age at least, have strong "identity poles" (Ethiopic Orthodox religion and radical, anti-Ethiopian nationalism) and "ethnic institutions" (Father Yohannes' church and the EPLF), which not only preserve these aspects of their identity, but manage to draw some resources from the "host society". If the context remains the same, neither "assimilation" in the "host society", nor an "ethnic transformation" of identity, institutions and politics are likely to emerge. On the other hand a greater reliance by Eritreans on these institutions is to be expected, as long as they can cater for an identity that is alternative to that of the society that excludes them and manage these resources.

Second generation and identity transformation

The same might not be true of "second generation" Eritreans, with changing attitudes and expectations towards the "host society" and a less direct experience of their country of origin. It will therefore be assessed if it is possible to speak of a transformation of the ethnic identity of these groups which is correlated with the presence of a "second generation" of migrants. For example Cashmore (1979) argues that the emergence of a Rastafarian identity among West Indians, sharply different from the identity of the first West Indian migrants, is to be associated with the changing attitudes, experiences and perceptions of British society by second generation migrants. While "second generation" migrants are usually considered those born in the new country, in this case the Milanese-born Eritreans are likely to be less than 10 years old and therefore too young to display those signs of a transformation of cultural identity that is usually associated with "second generation". On the other hand Eritrean teenagers, an age-group which would start to show these signs, are usually not Italian-born, but have lived in Italy on average for 3-5 years. This group may be considered as "quasi-second generation" immigrants because they have spent at least part of their formative adolescent period in Italy and have experienced, at least in part, its educational system. The hypothesis to test is whether there is indeed such an "identity transformation" that could be distinguishable for this group, as opposed to Eritreans who, even if only slightly older, or who have lived in Italy for a similar number of years, came after the age of 18-20, when

such a transformation is less likely to occur. From a theoretical point of view, it will be assessed whether this transformation is due to an "identity crisis" and is therefore "conservative" (Lanternari 1976) or to changing expectation and circumstances and is therefore a "ritual of resistance" (cf. Hall and Jefferson, 1976). The extent of the presence of the family, crucial to the development of identity (cf. Epstein 1978), but not necessarily leading to "pathological" behaviour in the case of the absence of the father (16), as is often the case with young Eritreans, will also be briefly examined.

The life-histories, behaviour and identity of a group of students, mostly Eritreans, in a training course to become plumbers/electricians run by EMASI (cf. chapter 6) can now be examined. This is also because I worked for this institution for about a year as part of my voluntary service instead of military service. Table 8.1 lists the students in the course with some of the main characteristics of their life-histories. Table 8.1 shows that the "Ethiopian" group, virtually all of whom are from Eritrea, is the largest one. Because of their numbers, social solidarity and the fact of having an Eritrean teacher, the Eritreans constituted the strongest and culturally dominant group within the course, although it was not a socially and culturally homogeneous group. Although it would be interesting to discuss "interethnic" relations within the course, for reasons of space the discussion will be confined to the Eritrean students and to the Egyptian one in the next section.

Table 8.1 Students attending the EMASI course

<u>name</u>	<u>nationality</u>	<u>date of birth</u>	<u>date of immigration</u>	<u>family in Italy</u>	<u>education</u>	<u>name</u>	<u>nationality</u>	<u>date of birth</u>	<u>date of immigration</u>	<u>family in Italy</u>	<u>education</u>
<u>Group A</u>						<u>Group B</u>					
Hassan	Egyptian	1970	1985	father	1 year high school (Egypt)	Yonas	Ethiopia	1967	1980	mother, father & 5 brothers	1 year high school (Italy)
Mohamed	Somalia	1967	1983	father, mother, 1 brother	2 years elementary school (Somalia)	Abraham	Ethiopia	1965	1984	mother	3 years high school (Ethiopia)
Osar	Somalia	1968	1982	none	3 years elementary school (Somalia)	Berhane	Ethiopia	1965	1984	none	3 years high school (Ethiopia)
Jose	El Salvador	1969	1981	mother & 3 brothers	2 years middle school (Italy)	Ernesto	Argentina	1960	1985	none	2 years university (Argentina)
Juan	El Salvador	1964	1980	mother & 6 sisters	2 years middle school (Italy)	Paolo	Argentina	1960	1985	none	3 years high school (Argentina)
Martin	El Salvador	1965	1983	mother & 3 brothers	2 years middle school (Italy)	Pradip	Mauritius	1961	1984	none	3 years high school (Mauritius)
Gideon	Ethiopia	1968	1983	mother & 1 sister	3 years elementary school (Ethiopia)	Source: EMASI: "noi giovani Stranieri" (1986, Milan).					
Haile	Ethiopia	1968	1981	mother & 4 brothers	2 years middle school (Italy)						
Petros	Ethiopia	1968	1982	mother & 1 brother	1 year middle school (Italy)						
Michael	Ethiopia	1968	1981	mother, father & 4 brothers	3 years middle school (Italy)						

The background to some of the Eritrean boys on the course, like Abraham, Berhane, Yonas (of the Tesfazyon family), Haile (Lemlem's son) and Michael (of the Ghebreyesus family) can be found in chapter 4. Suffice it to remember that while Abraham and Haile were both born in Asmara, but from Tigrean-Ethiopian families, Berhane comes from an Eritrean family, but was born and brought up in Addis Abeba. On the other hand Yonas is a "pure" Eritrean, born and raised in Asmara. The other two Eritrean boys both had similar backgrounds, born and raised in Asmara, and situations in Italy, having dropped "middle school" (17) before completing it and living in Italy with only their mothers, brothers and sisters. The most important differences between the two groups, as far as the Eritreans are concerned, are therefore the age at which they arrived in Italy and the related facts of having completed secondary education in their own home country (Abraham and Berhane) or of having their whole family living in Milan (Yonas). The fact that the Eritreans in group A (the advanced learning group) who lacked the above characteristics (with the exception of Michael) on the whole performed worse in the course than those in group B, seems to confirm the hypothesis that there is a dividing line between those who migrated in their late teens, after having completed the full educational and psychological cycle in their own country, and those who migrated in the early teens ("quasi-second generation"), only a couple of years younger and with a longer period of stay in Italy. For the latter it can be hypothesized that the interruption of their educational process at a delicate period, the need to adjust to a new system of education (they all attended Italian state

school . for some years) and the subsequent school failures (also due to linguistic problems) created difficulties for their learning skills. The only exception to this pattern was Yonas who, even if classifiable in the "quasi-second generation" group, on a whole performed quite well in the course. It should be pointed out, however, that Yonas lived in Milan with his whole family, including his father who, as Yonas would often tell me, exercised a strong pressure on him to pursue education. Yonas not only attended the EMASI course, but also was the only Eritrean to have reached high school in Italy.

Besides educational failures, other sets of "problems" usually associated with second generation are "deviant" tendencies and tensions with parents. There is limited evidence for the first case (taking as "deviant" behaviours that are stigmatized by members of the same ethnic group) and more extensive evidence for the second one. Haile was in the common situation for members of his group of living in Milan with only his mother and brothers. But, besides that, even if at the time of the course he lived in a casa occupata with the rest of his family, he experienced several years in Milan living on his own in a Catholic institute, since his mother was working as a full-time maid in an Italian family. The combination of all these elements, creating a situation and a perception of marginalization, which helps to explain Haile's "deviant" tendencies. Haile talked very little to anybody in the course and later we discovered that he was responsible for many small thefts that occurred from to other students (including Eritrean friends) as well as outside the course.

His tendency to steal seemed to be more of a psychological nature than of an economic one, since he often stole objects that were of no use to him and sometimes even gave them back or to somebody else as a present. Another Eritrean boy, in a similar situation (he enrolled in the course, but soon dropped out), made use of drugs. In both cases "criminal" behaviour seems to be the result of psychological processes due to social marginalization, rather than "ethnic enterprise". Second or "quasi-second" generation and female-headed households are not enough to create these situations, but coupled with an upbringing in institutions and not in the family, they might bring them about.

Concerning the correlation between "second generation" and conflict with parents, the evidence is more extensive. These conflicts partly related to different expectations from the "host society" and consequently different views of the relationship to it and in particular over the usage of leisure time, which Hall et al. (1976) see as an important prerequisite for the development of "youth subcultural responses". Michael, for example, was registered for the course by his father who told us he hoped he would learn something useful in view of a return to Eritrea (something sounding like a classical "myth of return", since the parents had been in Italy for the past 12 years and have no prospects of return as long as the situation there does not improve). Michael, like other Eritrean boys in his situation, also expressed the desire to go back to Eritrea, but saw it more like a vague possibility as opposed to the more concrete chance of staying in Italy or in neighbouring countries.

Parents usually encourage their children to attend places like the Eritrean Youth Centre (attached to Father Yohannes' church), since they hope they will enable their children to retain their identity. On the other hand they strongly object to their children going out to attend Italian social places that would "corrupt" their children. Rather than just a moral judgment, this seems a way of expressing the fear of a change in cultural identity and "political" allegiances. On the other hand the children, who foresee many years in the "host society" and feel less strongly the parental identity and particularly the nationalist consciousness, do not want to miss out on new opportunities.

When Michael started the course, he identified totally with his family. However he gradually started attending the "bad" places of socialization in Milan (described below), that attracted the condemnation of the adults, even if he still attended the Youth Centre or Eritrean "ethnic events". He also started to smoke, something that is stigmatized by adult Eritreans. Severe tensions with his family started to emerge. This pattern applied also to Gideon, Haile, Petros and, to a lower extent, Yonas. Three months after the beginning of the course, Gideon, Haile and Petros left for Germany (which recognizes Eritreans as political refugees) and it is probable that Michael joined them in the end. Although they could get many benefits in Germany as political refugees, none of them had any sojourn problem in Italy and they all had a family supporting them. It can be hypothesized therefore, that they left mainly in order to escape the social control of their families and the "Eritrean network"

(I heard some reports to confirm this) because, although they did not have their fathers living with them, their mothers still carried the weight of authority and the social control exercised by the "ethnic institutions" and their leadership was quite tight.

On the other hand Abraham, of a different age-group, did not have any major tension with his mother, Ruth, with whom he lived. He respected the main Ethiopic Orthodox religious traditions, although he did eat pork (which is forbidden), but outside home. He never gave any cause of complaint to his mother in terms of fear of "bad habits". At the course he got a job with the enterprise from whom he did his practical training. Had Berhane also had some family in Milan the relationship would have probably been the same. As argued before, the differences between the two Eritrean youth subgroups can be explained in part by their arrival in Italy at different stages of the life-cycle, entailing different stages of socialization, identity and expectations. School failures, living conditions and discrimination would have been other causes. The cultural content of the issues that divided these boys from their parents can now be analyzed.

The different conditions of the two age-groups, entailed an "ethnic transformation" in the first group that was made up of two cultural spheres. The first one consisted of cultural items "borrowed" from the "host society" (and Western culture in general) while the second one of Eritrean cultural items either dropped, or transformed and recontextualized, to convey new meanings (cf. Clarke 1976). In the last five

years or so, Milan in particular has experienced the growth of youth bands based on distinctive "styles", especially distinguished by clothing, after the fragmentation of the post-1968 political groups. Some of these bands are closely modelled on their British counterparts (punks, mods, etc.), while others were distinctively Italian, like the paninari. Although none of these groups has a very clear-cut political orientation, some of them are more radical-anarchic (e.g. the punk) and some of them more right-wing-conservative (e.g. the paninari). The latter often meet in piazza San Babila, which was once the meeting place of fascist groups. The fast-food restaurants that have been opened in that area in the past few years are an essential part of the style of these groups, being their favourite meeting places.

Many of the "quasi-second generation" Eritreans had piazza San Babila and the fast-food restaurants as their favourite meeting places, even if they did not integrate with the other youth bands, but formed a separate one. It is possible that drugs are also used and dealt in these places. These places are condemned by Eritreans adults and seen as sources of "corruption". Besides meeting places, style of clothing (of which these young Eritreans were very conscious), body building, football (support and play) and music were other cultural items "borrowed" from the "host society" (18). While football was practiced also by adult Eritreans and these other leisure activities were not necessarily condemned, they acquired a new meaning as other distinctive characteristics of the Eritrean youth "subgroup". As far as football is concerned, young Eritreans not only played it in

their own "Milanafrica" team, but also followed the Italian championship very closely (reading the daily sports newspaper) and often going to the stadium. Usually young Eritrean in Milan supported A.C. Milan, rather than Inter F.C., because the second team has the reputation of having many racist fans. As far as music and dance is concerned, apart from Bob Marley, the favourite singer is Michael Jackson and the favourite style of dancing is break-dance. All these cultural items coexist with the "traditional" Eritrean ones, but start to identify "second generation" Eritreans as a "youth subcultural group", defined also by items borrowed from the "host society" (in terms of Western culture). But this also shows the emergence of a kind of "black awareness" (football and racism, black music and dance). It should also be noted that, unlike in Britain (cf. McRobbie and Garber 1976), Eritrean young women to a large extent participate in this subculture.

These young Eritreans did not necessarily refuse "traditional" Eritrean culture as they attended the Eritrean Youth Centre and festivals organized by Father Yohannes and the Front. But while the identification with Orthodox Christianity still persisted, in spite of the neglect of many religious precepts the nationalist pole of their parents' identity began to show some signs of disintegration. This was shared also by people like Abraham and Berhane, even if the former came from a Tigrean family (but was brought up in Asmara and felt, at the beginning at least, some sympathy with the Eritrean cause) and the latter, although of Eritrean family, felt more "Ethiopian", being

born and raised in Addis Abeba. For example, most of the Eritreans who went to see the Ethiopian concert where Amhara music was also played (cf. chapter 7), in spite of pressures from the Front not to attend it, were "second generation" ones. Among them there was Yonas who, as a young boy in Asmara, used to stick illegal EPLF posters. When his father, an EPLF supporter, came to know this, he got very angry at him. Also, after I went to the Bologna festival with Yonas, Abraham and Berhane, while they all said they enjoyed the music played by Tekle, the traditional dances and food, they told me they resented the sectarianism of the Front which privileged young Eritreans in its youth cadres. This is all the more striking from somebody like Yonas who is a "pure" Eritrean.

Rather than a contradiction between Ethiopian-Amharic and western-black music, as opposed to Tigrinya-Eritrean music, young Eritreans seem to integrate the two. Often in the Youth Centre young Eritreans would tell me that they were playing (both on a tape recorder and live with some instruments) Ethiopian-Amharic music or else Eritrean-Tigrinya music, or Michael Jackson and Bob Marley. The different expectations of staying in Italy as opposed to going back to Eritrea and the fall in nationalist consciousness as a live political issue (even if many of these young Eritreans remain aware of the issue and maintain their support of Eritrean independence), help to understand that a transformation from an Eritrean identity to a wider Abyssinian one might have started. This would allow them to incorporate both some "traditional" cultural items and those

borrowed from the "host society" mentioned above, and to recontextualize them in a "new" identity containing some Rastafarian elements, thereby reflecting their situation as an emerging "black diaspora" group. Although a full-fledged Rastafari movement, both in terms of "distinctive style" (dreadlocks etc.) and doctrine (Haile Selassie I, etc.) has not yet developed, there are signs that a "drifting", to use Cashmore's (1979) term, is emerging. Bob Marley is probably the greatest musical hero and although he was already known before the migrants came to Italy, "it is only now that I understand his message", as a young Eritrean put it. Rastafari symbols appeared in Eritrean homes that I visited in the rooms of the children. As they include the Ethiopian national colours, they are a symbol of rupture in the home of nationalist Eritreans. The adoption of Rastafari identity is made easier by the fact that these youth already possess some of the "cultural traits" utilized by Rastafarianism and in particular Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity. This means that "we don't have to take on board all the religious aspects of Rastafari: we are already Ethiopic Orthodox", as a young Eritrean told me. It should be emphasized that this is only a trend, as there are still degrees of allegiance to the "traditional" values (including nationalist ones). The older boys, like Abraham, although they are also Bob Marley fans, do not incorporate him as part of a distinctive lifestyle.

In summary, while adult Eritreans rely on the two "traditional identity poles" as a result of the non-recognition of their special relationship to the "host society", "quasi-second generation" ones, with different

expectations and experiences, are beginning to transform their identity to that of a "black diaspora" group, in which Rastafari is an important element. These processes with respect to the Egyptians will be analyzed below.

B.3 Attitudes towards the "host society" and "ethnic transformation of the Egyptians

Egyptian attitudes towards the "host society" and perceptions of racism

Egyptians come to Italy for a mix of economic and sociocultural reasons (cf. chapter 4). Their choice of Italy is determined more by pragmatic considerations than by historical and cultural ones, unlike the Eritreans. Therefore their expectations about the "host society" are less high and ideologically based and more pragmatic. It is a migration determined more by choice than by necessity. Provided that these preconditions are satisfied, most people enjoy staying in Italy. For example Ibrahim (cf. chapter 4) told me: "On the whole I enjoy life in Italy as I have a relatively good salary and can experience things I couldn't in Egypt. I would like to go back but only for a brief holiday". Of all the Egyptians I interviewed, only Suliman, who works 64 hours a week in a bakery, told me he would definitely like to leave Italy and go to Great Britain and work with a cousin of his, if he can obtain a permit. For most Egyptians, even if their average working week is longer than that of Italian workers this does not seem to be a major set-back. They seem to be relatively content with the possibility of having a job, to make some money and to be able to enjoy some of the

sociocultural facilities Italy offers. To the question of what they thought of Italian people, they always gave the same answer: "it is difficult to generalize. There are, like in every country, good people and bad people". This individualistic attitude towards Italian people again contrasts quite sharply with the more generalizing statements made by Eritreans and is almost certainly due to the different causes of migration, perceptions of links with Italy, and expectations from the migratory experience. Moreover whereas Eritreans stress the historical links, some Egyptians have expressed the perception of a cultural affinity with Italy, in terms of a shared "Mediterraneanness" (especially in terms of character), although the links are not so strong as those perceived by the Eritreans.

Naturally Egyptians also resent their hard living conditions, but because of the different migratory project and expectations (there is no sense of something being historically "due" to them, as there is for the Eritreans) and the lower degree of (radical) political consciousness, they feel the presence of discrimination and racism to a lesser extent. Regarding the application of negative stereotypes like Marocchino, Magdi told me that it does not bother him, but wonders why he is called that way, since he comes from Egypt. The xenophobic tensions that followed the terrorist events mentioned before were felt as a worsening of the situation. While I heard reports that a few Egyptians had left this may not have been the determining cause, as it probably fell on top of other problems related to employment and housing. The prospects of a social and cultural

integration of Egyptians in Milan are differentiated. As argued in the previous chapter, intermarriage is one of the main forms of social enhancement pursued by Egyptians and although this does not necessarily mean "cultural assimilation", it certainly represents a major "structural" improvement and it may be assumed that permanent settlement in Italy would follow. Of those who, for one reason or another, do not intermarry, there are signs that, depending on factors like employment and housing, some might go back and some might settle more permanently in Italy. On the whole Egyptians, even if not completely secularized, have a "liberal" or "modernist" conception of Islam and have a very low degree of attendance at the Muslim Centre. For those who stay in Italy and do not intermarry, if the present lack of economic and social integration persists, it can be assumed that a return to a much stricter form of Islam and possibly a much higher rate of attendance to the Muslim Centre will follow (19). This would provide both an alternative identity to the "western" one they did not manage to become part of, and a network of links and contacts, if not with the "host society" (like for the Eritreans), among themselves and with other fellow-Muslims, leading to the development of an "informal organization" within the Muslim Brotherhood "secret society" (cf. Cohen 1969).

Second generation identity and transformation

As intermarriage is one of the most important "strategies" of social enhancement pursued by the Egyptians, but has the effect of creating a social differentiation within the group, it will also affect an "ethnic transformation" of the second

generation. Most actual second generation offspring are presently the children of these intermarriages. This creates problems of research because these children are on average too young to be of interest to this study and also because they are not likely to be found in the "ethnic institutions" and events where a researcher can interview and "observe" them. However from a conversation with an official of the Egyptian consulate it is possible to speculate about what might be going on. He told me that there are many signs that the children of these "mixed marriages", are beginning to encounter some difficulties in maintaining the Egyptian-Muslim side of their identity, especially from a linguistic and a religious point of view. This is because the language spoken in the family, in the school and the "wider society", is Italian and because the level of commitment to Islam of the Muslim parent (usually the father) does not seem to be strong enough to counter the "lay" forces the child is going to be subjected to. Also a "reactive ethnicity" in term of a return to Islam as a result of discrimination is not likely to occur, because of the socioeconomic (legal rights, citizenship, etc.), linguistic and "physical" ("colour") lack of differentiation with the "host society".

However other trends are also possible. For example of those Egyptians who decide to stay in Italy but, for one reason or another, do not marry an Italian woman, some might go back temporarily to Egypt to get married (one Egyptian I interviewed, Abdel, had this intention) and then be joined by their family, or an increase in migration of Egyptian

women to Italy might occur (e.g. Ismail married an Egyptian woman in Italy, but one whom he knew from Egypt). Hassan, the only Egyptian boy who followed the EMASI course, followed the first pattern. He was 15 years old when he joined the course and had been living in Milan for just over a year with his father, Mustafa' (cf. chapter 4). Even though he had completed his first year of high school in Egypt and was quite an intelligent and educated boy, his poor knowledge of the Italian language, the fact of being the only Egyptian boy on the course and of having no Egyptian (or Italian) friends, made him encounter difficulties in the course. He socialized very little with the other students, had difficulties in understanding and being understood and, probably as a result, he was very shy. At the end of the first half of the course in which, in spite of everything, he was relatively proficient, he was taken to hospital suffering from an asthma attack. After a few weeks he was dismissed, but his father decided that it was better for him to go back to Egypt where he started high school again. Later on Mustafa' told me that his son wished to come back to Italy, provided that he could find another suitable course. Hassan's story illustrates the social and psychological difficulties other young Egyptians in his position might also encounter, feeling strangers in a new society (even if attracted by it) and lacking the alternative identity and social support, given by a substantial number of "fellow-ethnic" family and age-peer groups, like for the Eritreans. If a substantial number of "pure" second generation Egyptians does develop, however, it can be suggested that, as for their parents, the lack of socioeconomic (legal rights, patterns of employment),

linguistic and, to a lesser extent, "physical" ("pure" Arabs are more recognizable than "half-cast" ones) integration in the "host society" will entail a "reactive" return to Islam, as suggested above.

In summary, the Egyptians come to Italy with more pragmatic expectations about what they will find in the "host society" and hold a more "individualistic" attitude towards their relationship with the Italian people. As a result of this, they seem to feel the discriminatory practices of the "host society" less, both at the socioeconomic and ideological level. However, while there may be a relative degree of integration and, eventually, even of assimilation for those Egyptians who intermarry with Italians, the same might not apply for those who do not and yet decide to stay in Italy. For them a greater adherence to Islam than the one they practiced in the first years of their settlement is more likely to happen.

8.4 Eritrean-Egyptian relations

As may be expected, the economic, social and cultural differences between Eritreans and Egyptians prevent any substantial degree of interaction between the two groups. This can be seen not only by the absence of members of one group from the institutions and events of the other, but also by an almost total segregation in situations of proximity. For example, in a street where there is an Eritrean restaurant and bar, there is also a bar attended by many Egyptians (run by Italians), who never attend the Eritrean

one. What is more interesting is the awareness of each other's presence and the existence of reciprocal stereotypes that reveal the emergence of a certain degree of rivalry and competition. This rivalry and competition is not a direct one, for example in economic terms (as there may be between Eritrean and Philippino maids, where the former accuse the latter of unfair competition as they accept jobs with lesser pay and a lower degree of social security). On the other hand it seems that between Eritreans and Egyptians it is more in terms of differentiating themselves from the racist stereotypes the "host society" holds about them both.

The greatest amount of evidence was found among the Eritreans. For example Samuel told me that when Eritreans go to places like the voluntary organizations described in chapter 6, they may come just to get a job and if an officer asks them: "do you want a free meal?", they would answer "I came here to work, not to get charity", implying that Egyptians, on the other hand, do accept charity. In other words, he seemed to want to distance his group from the perception the "host society" might have of the migrants as "parasitic immigrants, living off our backs". Secondly he also said that "while Eritreans tend to marry among themselves, Egyptians would marry prostitutes in order to get Italian citizenship". Again there was the notion of the "opportunistic migrant" vs. "ethnic dignity", this time made even stronger by the presence of marriage, as a rite of passage enabling the defence of "ethnic dignity". Thirdly there was among many Eritreans, the perception of Egyptians in terms of "criminality". "They are all thieves" was a very

common response to the question of what they thought of Egyptians. While all these sentences have some bearing on reality (cf. chapters 6 and 7), the terms in which they are constructed and the lack of analysis of the reason for this situation, make them stereotypes that are not racist because they lack the power to implement discriminatory practices they would entail. Finally there is also, among young Eritreans, an "ethnic joke" about Egyptians that draws on the even more "classic" racist imagery that the "host society" holds about "Marocchini" in general, referring to the (supposed) inability of African people and Arab people in particular to pronounce the letter "p". A famous Italian singer is called Loredana Berte'. An Egyptian in a discotheque asks the disc-jockey if he could play a record by "Loredana". The dj asks "Berte'?" The Egyptian answers: "Ber me, ber te', ber tutti" (mistaking the surname for the question "per te'?", meaning "for you?" and therefore answering: "for me, for you, for everybody"). What is interesting is that Eritreans share, to a lesser extent, the difficulty of pronouncing the letter "p", but transfer this perceived "inability" which is considered, by the "host society", the linguistic mark of "primitiveness", on to the Egyptians. And it is precisely around the notion of "primitiveness" that the few remarks I heard from Egyptians about Eritreans were constructed (e.g. "Eritreans are more primitive and lazier, and make their women work").

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined various interrelated issues. In the first place it tried to analyze the pattern of racist ideologies and discriminatory practices that are applied by the "host society" to the migrant groups. While some "structural" discriminations (in terms of lack of legal rights that create a "clandestine army of labour") have been examined in previous chapters, here it was pointed out that the "material bases" for the emergence of discriminatory practices and attitudes were to be found not so much in the field of employment but in that of "social reproduction" (housing, places of socialization and worship, etc.) and in the area of "criminality". This also provided a set of ideological imagery around which the migrants were constructed (the "criminalization" of migrants), an imagery that was less of a "classical" racist type couched in the biological language of "race" (also because of the relative lack of this "tradition" in Italy) and more in terms of "disreputable lifestyles", "alienness", "criminality" and "terrorism". The last notion was stimulated by some dramatic current events, while others were linked to the "traditional repertoire", related to the perception of Islam and, to a lesser extent, to the colonial past. Although the two groups were to a large extent categorized together and the same negative label, Marocchino, applied to both of them (thereby disproving certain theories about the analytical validity of the concept of "race", in terms of "phenotypes"), they perceived the situation and reacted in different ways.

The patterns reported depended on the different causes of migration, expectations and perceptions of links with the "host society" and characteristics of the migrant groups in terms of demographic structure and politico-cultural characteristics. Thus the Eritreans who migrate more out of necessity than choice, as a group than individuals, expect a "special relationship" with Italy because of the colonial past and have a higher degree of radical political consciousness, perceive their situation as worse than the Egyptians who hold a more individualistic and pragmatic attitude towards the "host society", even if in certain respects the situation of the latter is worse than that of the former. Consequently also patterns of "ethnic transformation" differ between the two groups. In the Eritrean case while first generation migrants have strong identity and network support from the two main "ethnic institutions" to rely on, there are signs that in the second generation an "ethnic transformation" may be emerging. This seems to be due to the different patterns of socialization available to youth within Milanese society and to the decline of Eritrean national consciousness as a live political issue and relevant identity. A Rastafarian identity is beginning to emerge that allows young Eritreans to incorporate certain cultural items of the "host society" and to retain certain "traditional" ones. But it is "Abyssinian" rather than Eritrean and, with its ideological content, it reflects their situation as a "black diaspora" group. On the question of the relationship between the second generation and "social deviance" or "social problems", only limited evidence was found, provided that a number of negative social

situations (single parents, institutionalized upbringing) overlapped. but in no way due to the "pathology" of the family.

On the other hand the situation of Egyptians is more differentiated, especially on the basis of whether they intermarry with Italian women or not. If this is the case, one can expect a certain degree of social and cultural integration at the level of the first generation and maybe even of assimilation at that of second generation. If they do not and decide to stay in Italy one can hypothesize a return to a greater practice of Islam as an alternative identity and a greater reliance on the Muslim Centre also in terms of socialization and access to networks, even if internal to the Muslim community. This would probably apply also to a second generation that might begin to emerge also for this group. Finally although interaction between the two groups is very low, there is an awareness of each other's presence and there exist negative stereotypes about each other, especially in order to try to counter the negative views of the "host society".

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

- (1) Cf. la Repubblica (August 22, 1985 and September 5, 1985).
- (2) Comune di Milano: "Interpellanza del 16-9-1985 pervenuta il 3-10-1985 del Consigliere rag. De Corato e altri. Oggetto: occupazioni abusive di migranti Eritrei".
- (3) As mentioned in chapter 4, there is also a conflict over the estimate of foreign immigrants in Milan between the media (which usually tends to exaggerate the number) and the leaders of the migrant groups (who usually tend to minimize it). For example il Giorno (January 9, 1986) had an article on the local Milanese page with the headline: "they are 100,000 and one out of three is outlaw".
- (4) Abu Nidal is a group that broke away from the PLO in the early 1970s which is suspected to be behind many terrorist attacks related to the Middle-Eastern question.
- (5) Cf. also Reporter (January 5, 1986) which carried the headline "Doors less open to foreigners".
- (6) La Repubblica (February 2, 1986) reports an Egyptian porter fired while he was ill. A friend of mine told me (late January 1986) that an Egyptian waiter who was arguing with an Italian client about a pizza was fired on the spot.
- (7) Schools have not been considered because data could not be found.
- (8) See chapter 4 and Figure 4.1, where it was argued that this was more an "ethnic" area in terms of socialization than residence.
- (9) The Eritreans, however, seem to have opted, for internal reasons mentioned in chapters 5 and 7 rather than because of external racism, to socialize in "ethnically exclusive" bars and restaurants.
- (10) E.g. in Britain there is the stereotype of West Indians as "lazy and noisy" and Asians as "crafty and sneaky".
- (11) These differences exist even given the "semitic" traits of Eritreans.
- (12) The term "Negro" in Italian has less negative connotations than in English, being just a slightly archaic form of "nero", meaning "black".
- (13) Cf. the label "Pakis" for Asians in Britain.
- (14) Even if this might be coexisting with racism in other social spheres, like housing. Cf. Rex and Moore (1967) and Rex and Tomlinson (1979).
- (15) Cf. Mingione (1981, 1983a, 1983b), to whom I am indebted

for an early suggestion of this point.

(16) Chant (1984) makes this argument with reference to female-headed Mexican households.

(17) The Italian educational system is divided as follows: 5 years of "elementary school", 3 years of "middle school" (which terminates compulsory education), 5 years of "high school", in which the student, when registering, decides the type of study to follow (e.g. classical, scientific, technical, etc.).

(18) Football and music, of course, were also practiced in their country of origin. But, as far as football is concerned, only the Eritreans' entry into the sociocultural context of Italian football support is being emphasized. Music refers to non-"traditional" Eritrean or Ethiopic music.

(19) For the emergence of this pattern in France, even if in a different context, see Kutchera (1984)

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter examines two issues: the character of ethnic politics or "ethnicity" and the theoretical implications of this study for the analysis of "urban ethnicity".

9.1 A characterization of the two ethnic groups

Figure 9.1 summarizes the main differences between the Eritreans and Egyptians discussed in this thesis.

In chapters 3 and 4 it was demonstrated that, because of certain regulations concerning foreign immigration and because of the requirements of the labour market, Third World immigrants largely occupy the unprotected lower tertiary sector and are therefore excluded from the unionized "protected" working class, being largely confined to precarious forms of tenancies. Within these broad sectors, however, the two migrant groups occupy different niches. In terms of employment, the Eritreans work primarily in the domestic/cleaning sector, while the Egyptians work mainly in catering. In terms of housing, besides precarious tenancies and residence with the employer (in the case of "permanently resident" maids), Eritreans have made extensive use of squats (case occupate) and increasingly, virtually alone among other immigrant groups, of public housing (case popolari), while the Egyptians have largely been confined to precarious tenancies and dormitories. Finally Eritreans have a higher

Figure 9.1: Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan: a comparative scheme

<u>ERITREANS</u>		<u>EGYPTIANS</u>	
<u>BACKGROUND (ch. 2)</u>		<u>ETHNIC INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATION (ch. 5)</u>	
<u>The cultural background (2.1)</u>		<u>"Ethnic" institutions and leaders (5.1)</u>	
identification with Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity; radical nationalist consciousness.	"modernist" identification with Islam (universalist); pan-arabism.	Church (Catholic, but Eritrean priest: Father Yonannes); Front (nationalist politicization, main Milanese leader: Tekle); 3 restaurants.	Muslim Centre (fundamentalist Sunni Islam; Italian leader: Abubakar, Giordanian leader: Sherif). Role of Egyptian Consulate?
<u>Causes of migration (2.2)</u>		<u>Ethnic events and participation (5.2)</u>	
first economic, then political (war with Ethiopia) reasons.	mixture of economic and social reasons.	Church (weekly mass, religious festivals, advisory centre: high attendance, high rate of births and marriages); Front (festivals, courses: high attendance).	Muslim Centre (daily prayer, religious festivals: low attendance, low rate of births and marriages).
<u>Choice of Italy (2.3)</u>		<u>"Ethnic" organization (5.3)</u>	
because of historical links (colonialism)	as nearest accessible "western" country	Formation of Eritrean Community with elected council from the various sections of the group. Meetings with the "base"	Recent "top-down" proposal to constitute an Egyptian Community by people linked to the Consulate.
<u>THE ITALIAN CONTEXT (ch.3)</u>		<u>Character of "ethnicity" (5.4)</u>	
Segmented labour market; gaps in the lower service sector Legislation on foreign immigration pushing the migrants into "illegality" and into the lower service sector Limited access to public housing and services (Milan) (3.1)		"ethnic group with ethnic consciousness"	"ethnic group with ethnic awareness"
<u>"STRUCTURAL" ASPECTS (ch.4)</u>		<u>LOCAL VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS (ch. 6)</u>	
<u>Size (estimates) and sex-ratio (4.1)</u>		<u>Attendance at local voluntary associations (6.1)</u>	
ca. 2,500 (ca. 60% Female)	ca. 12,000 (ca. 80% Male)	High attendance to associations helping with long-term integration and political connections.	High attendance at associations helping with short-term relief.
<u>"Illegality" (estimates) (4.2)</u>		<u>ETHNIC POLITICS (ch. 7)</u>	
ca. 50% "clandestines"	ca. 85% "clandestines"	<u>"Cultural strategies" (7.1)</u>	
<u>Major sex-age groups (estimates) (4.3)</u>		Stressing the group's distinctiveness and presenting themselves as a Catholic and oppressed national minority.	Playing down distinctiveness and stressing lay and "Mediterranean" side of their identity.
Male and female (0-9)= 10% Male and female (10-19)= 10% Male (20-39)= 20% Female (20-39)= 30% Male (40-59)= 10% Female (40-59)= 20%	Male and female (0-9)= 5% Male and female (10-19)= 5% Male (20-39)= 65% Female (20-39)= 15% Male (40-59)= 10% Female (40-59)= 0%	<u>Usurpation" (7.2)</u>	
<u>Type of family groups (estimates) (4.4)</u>		At a group level through leadership's contacts with the "host society" in the field social reproduction.	At the individual level through intermarriage and with some degree of "ethnic crime".
Single women= 20% Single women with children=20-30% Couples with children=30-40% Single men=10-15%	Single men=75% Couples with children=20% (many are "mixed" Eg-It) Single women=5%	<u>RACISM AND ETHNIC TRANSFORMATIONS (ch. 8)</u>	
<u>Main forms of employment (4.5)</u>		For both groups occurring in the field of social reproduction and culturally constructed. Both groups subsumed under same negative stereotype. For Egyptians some additional negative elements concerning Islam. (8.1)	
Cleaning sector: maids in Italian families; some "ethnic enterprise"	Catering sector: waiters, dishwashers, cooks; some "ethnic enterprise"	<u>Identity transformations (8.2)</u>	
<u>Housing (4.6)</u>		Second generation trend towards Rastafarianism.	Second generation partial assimilation, or reversal to Islamic fundamentalism
Precarious tenancies; squatting; public housing	Dormitories, precarious tenancies		

proportion of "legal" immigrants (ca. 50%) than the Egyptians (ca. 20%). Even if differences in employment niches can be explained in terms of the different sex-ratio between the two groups (ca. 60% female among Eritreans and 80% male among Egyptians) and of the "chain effect" of the network process, it cannot be said that one group is qualitatively better-off than the other in terms of employment. On the other hand, the specific pattern of employment may to a certain extent explain the higher percentage of "legal" immigrants for the Eritreans, because domestic workers can find a work permit more easily. However, this difference and, to a greater extent, the major qualitative difference in terms of housing, can also be explained in terms of the different pattern of leadership, organization and relationship with the "host society" of the two immigrant groups.

In analyzing this crucial difference, different patterns of ethnic identity and solidarity have been examined. While chapter 2 analyzed the social and cultural background of the areas of emigration, chapter 5 demonstrated that Eritrean identity in Milan revolves around two "identity poles": Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity and a radical nationalist consciousness. At the level of social practice this is expressed by the presence of two main "ethnic institutions": Father Yohannes' church and the "Front" (EPLF). Both organize activities and events that have a large attendance on the part of the Milanese Eritreans and there is a very high rate of "rites of passage" (births and marriages) performed in these institutions as opposed to "host society" institutions. Also, it seems that the majority of Eritreans attend both

institutions, even if there are two small separate groups of followers of Father Yohannes and the Front. On the other hand Egyptians, who have a "modernist" identification with Islam, have also a rather low attendance (also in terms of "rites of passage") at the only institution that could perform the function of an "ethnic institution", i.e. the Muslim Centre, which is controlled by the fundamentalist Sunni Muslim Brotherhood and is attended also by non-Egyptian Arabs. Bars and restaurants have important socializing functions for both Eritreans and Egyptians. But in general, the degree of group-wide interaction and the strength of support network, is much higher for the Eritreans than for the Egyptians.

The fact that Father Yohannes' church is a Catholic one (even if of Ethiopic ritual) and that quite a few non-Eritrean Ethiopians attend Front-organized events, suggests that the two "ethnic institutions" are not mere carry-overs from the identity of the countries of origin, analyzed in chapter 2. As far as Egyptians are concerned, while the low attendance at the Centre is justified with various reasons (distance, lack of time, etc.) and sometimes with "ideological" reasons (the fundamentalist character of the Centre), the most striking features is a preference for marrying Italian women and a greater class differentiation within the group. Using McKay and Lewins' (1978) typology, the Eritreans can be characterized as an "ethnic group with ethnic consciousness", while the Egyptians as an "ethnic group with ethnic awareness", the difference being that in the first case identity is significant, forming the basis of group

collective action, while in the second it is not. On the other hand, the followers of the Muslim Centre could be characterized as a "group" with "consciousness", even if defined in terms of (Islamic) religion and not in "ethnic" terms, not coinciding with the Egyptian group.

Moreover, and crucially, chapters 5 and 7 showed that, while the Eritreans have managed to constitute an articulated and formalized "Eritrean Community", with a statute, council and elections, which has enjoyed widespread support from the Eritrean "base", a similar and later attempt by a group of Egyptians close to the Consulate, has happened in isolation from the Egyptian "base" and has been met with considerable scepticism from the (few) Egyptians who found out about it. These major differences can be explained in part by the different demographic structures of the two groups, namely the smaller size of the Eritrean population (ca. 2,500 vs. ca. 12,000 Egyptians) and their more differentiated age and sex-ratio (while the Egyptians are 80% male and mostly between 20 and 49 years of age). This allows for a higher degree of face-to-face contacts and endogamous marriage for the Eritreans than for the Egyptians. The nationalist consciousness of the Eritreans and the fact of having a group-specific religion (albeit at the Ethiopian level), as opposed to the universalist character of Islam, might also help to explain the different strength of group identity and solidarity. However, these two sets of features (demography and character of identity) can only partially account for the extent of these differences. Chapters 6 and 7, on the other hand, examined what is perhaps the crucial difference between

the two groups, namely the different character of ethnic politics, both internal to the groups and in relation to the "host society". These differences can be further elaborated in terms of "ethnic resources", "cultural strategies" and politico-organizational practice.

The different character of ethnic identities helps to explain how the Christian and radical "identity poles" of the Eritreans allow them to understand and "play" Italian politics, and in particular Milanese ones, which are culturally dominated precisely by Catholic Christianity and radicalism (even if there are also other important cultural discourses), as shown in chapter 3. Chapter 6 analyzed the different attendance, on the part of the two groups, at the various voluntary organizations helping Third World immigrants. While Eritreans attended more organizations that helped with long-term integration (legal and political rights, education, etc.), the Egyptians attended those which provided temporary support (shelter, food, subsidies.) This can be seen not only in terms of the different character of the two migrations, i.e. the existence of a more effective solidarity network among the former, but also in the types of political contacts it allowed to establish. The Eritreans, through Father Yohannes, a member of the Catholic Church, and Tekle, the leader of the Front expounding the cause of Eritrean liberation, managed to be established good links with various "host society" organizations, mainly of "progressive-Catholic" or radical post-1968 persuasions, while the attitude of the Communist Party has been more ambivalent. These links were given greater legitimacy with

the establishment of the "Eritrean Community", presenting the image of a cohesive and articulated group.

This has meant that Father Yohannes has been able to provide various facilities to Eritreans, like premises for socialization and meetings, holidays and recreational activities for young people, through the Church, and employment for Eritrean maids and sojourn permits for his compatriots, through his status as Catholic priest. On the other hand Tekle and the Front, through their contacts with trade unions and other organizations, was able not only to install many Eritrean families in case occupate but also, as a member of the Eritrean Community, to put pressure on the local authorities to grant Eritreans public housing, given the discretionary rules on its allocation to foreigners. Finally both Father Yohannes and the Front, on every public occasion, remind the Italian public of their "historical" duty towards Eritrea because of the colonial past, aiming at the long-term strategy of gaining the status of political refugees, and reinforcing the "moral basis" for deserving their support. The "cultural strategy" of Eritreans has therefore consisted of presenting themselves to the "host society" as a Catholic group (even if internally they follow Ethiopic Orthodox Christianity) and as a "nation" oppressed by "Ethiopian colonialism" (even if not everybody supports Eritrean nationalism).

On the contrary, Egyptians lack the "ethnic resources" enjoyed by the Eritreans and the Muslim Centre has not yet been able to implement its proposed plan to construct a

mosque in Milan, because of opposition from the local population, but also because of lack of political contacts. While for the Eritreans ethnic organization and leadership with their ability to draw resources from "host society", reinforce their allegiance to "ethnic institutions", for the Egyptians this relationship is lacking. This helps to explain the relative failure (for the time being) of the attempt to constitute an Egyptian Community with functions as an "ethnic organization" like the Eritrean one. However Egyptians might have alternative ways to counter this relative lack of "ethnic resources". Intermarriage (with Italian women), as shown in chapter 7, may be an alternative strategy as Egyptians are the "foreign" group with the highest rate of intermarriage with the Italian population, at least in the year 1985. Some degree of "ethnic" enterprise and criminality may be another alternative and there is some evidence that their crime rate, especially related to drugs, is among the highest among the various migrants groups in Milan and definitely much higher than the Eritreans'. On the whole the "cultural strategy" of the Egyptians involves "playing down" their identity and stressing its "lay" side and "Mediterraneanness".

While the above social processes can be defined as different "usurpatory cultural strategies" employed by Eritreans and Egyptians to counter their situation of structural subordination, it has to be recognized that there are "exclusionary" practices employed by the "host society". Chapter 8 has shown that, at the level of social practice, the "material bases" for discrimination are to be found not

so much in competition over employment between the migrants and members of the "host society", but in the area of social reproduction and services (housing, places of socialization and worship, etc.). The recent character of the migration helps to explain why members of the "host society" do not distinguish between many of the migrant groups (e.g. between Arabs and black Africans). Eritreans and Egyptians (among others) are both subsumed under the same negative label of Marocchini. This supports an explanation of discrimination and racism in terms of the "social construction of race", as opposed to the relevance of "race" defined in "phenotypical" terms. Other racist stereotypes were constructed more around notions of "criminality", "terrorism" and "disreputable lifestyles", than in the "classical" biological terms. These racist stereotypes and discriminations serve to reproduce the structural subordination of the various immigrant groups. Finally these processes, the expectations towards migration and the presence of a certain degree of generational conflict, help to explain an emerging trend towards a Rastafarian identity for some younger Eritreans. On the other hand, for those Egyptians who do not intermarry and yet decide to stay in Italy, one can hypothesize a redefinition of their identity in terms of a greater adherence to orthodox Islam and a greater reliance on the (fundamentalist) Muslim Centre.

In summary, "ethnicity", which can be defined as the relationship between "cultural resources" and "cultural strategies" on the one hand and "usurpatory" political practice on the other, is crucial for both groups in the

absence of class resources and of formal political power. For the Eritreans it involves "making use" of cultural difference, even if in the articulation of a network of political contacts with the "host society" and in the field of "social reproduction", rather than for the articulation of a trading network (Cohen 1969). For the Egyptians it involves "playing-down" such differences. Thus for the Eritreans it has gained them access to resources such as public housing, education, health, places of socialization and worship (but also a greater number of work permits) as a group, while for those Egyptians who intermarried, the acquisition of these (and other) resources, as individuals, and, for others, a certain involvement in organized crime. Eritreans can therefore be analyzed as an interest group, while Egyptians cannot. While both groups entered the "host society" in a common structural context, the different interplay of sociodemographic factors, ethnic identity, institutions and organizations, mediated by the "political" practice of leaders/brokers and "commoners", has led to a very different kind of "ethnicity" for the two groups and to very different kinds of benefits from the "host society". But while the two ethnic groups adopted different "usurpatory cultural strategies", the "host society" adopted a unified one, involving racist stereotypes at the ideological level and "exclusionary" practices at the sociopolitical one.

The conclusions reached so far are valid only for a specific period of time, i.e. in the three year period spanning from 1984 to 1986, as the situation is changing fast. For example in 1987, during the time of writing, many of the "illegal"

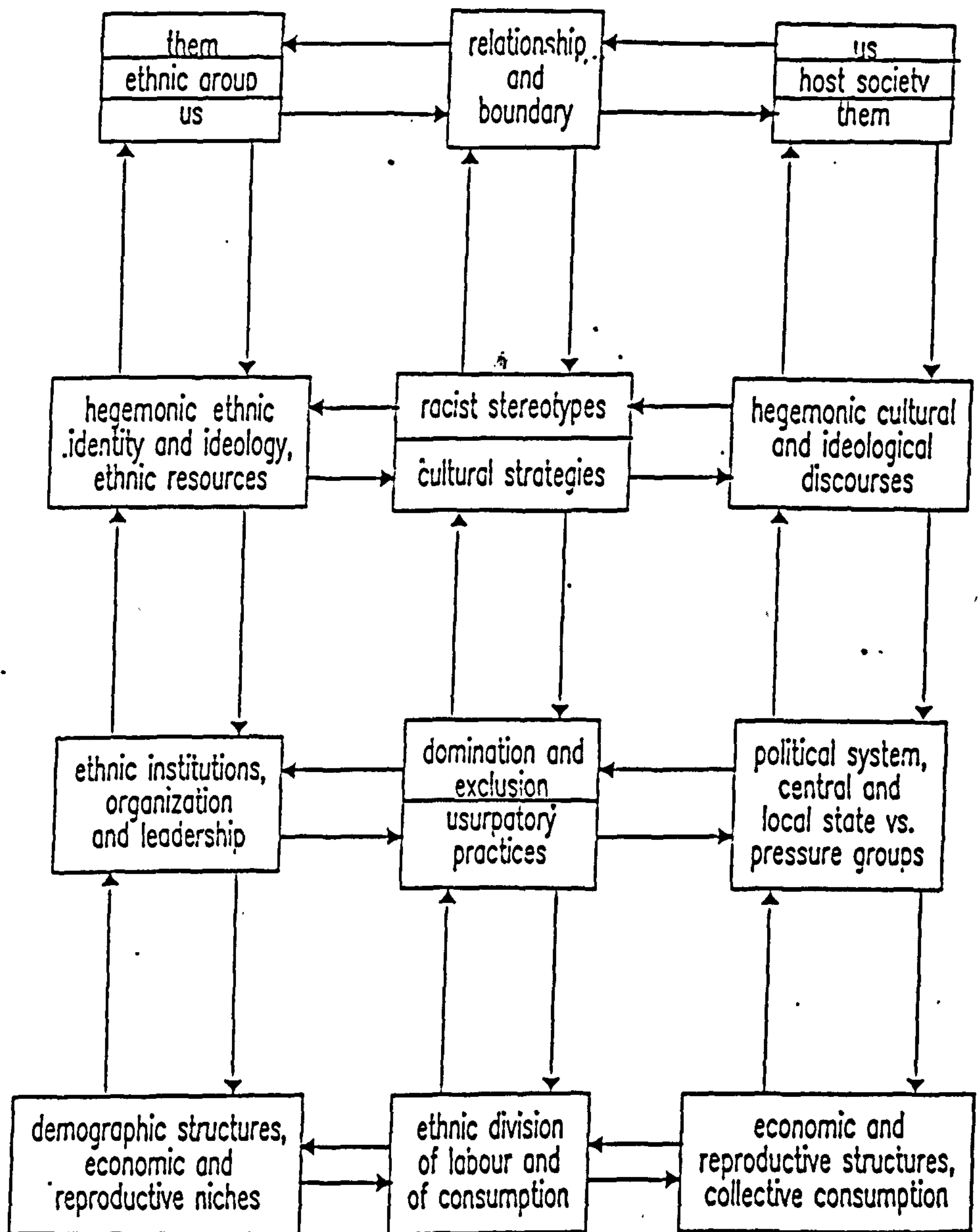
immigrants residing in Italy have been regularized. Secondly, these conclusions are valid only for Milan because, as argued before, the "context" is crucial. The situation of Eritreans and Egyptians in Rome, for example, might be rather different, as seems to be indicated by the few data obtained on the matter.

9.2 A framework for the analysis of "urban ethnicity"

Having analyzed the specific conclusions of this study, a few suggestions about its more general theoretical relevance and its contribution to the literature can be put forward. This can be done by proposing a theoretical framework for the analysis of "urban ethnicity" of which the present research constitutes a "case study". "Urban ethnicity" can be defined as the relationship between the culture and politics of a (minority) "ethnic" group (in the sense of having a common identity, perception of origins and history, maintained through "rites of passage") in an urban context.

These processes can be analysed by looking at the interplay of three groups of factors: socioeconomic and socioreproductive, "political" (in the sense already clarified) and cultural. These factors are within three different domains: the ethnic group, the "host society" and the relationship between the two (cf. Figure 9.2). It must be stressed that this is only a framework for explanation, the content of which will vary according to historically and socially specific situations.

Figure 9.2: A framework for the analysis of "urban ethnicity"



It is difficult to find a starting point because all the various "boxes" are interrelated and changes in one affect changes in the others. However, the analysis will arbitrarily begin with economic and reproductive factors. Starting with the "host society", the nature of productive and reproductive systems must be assessed. Within a capitalist, society for example, one has to see whether there are labour requirements in the manufacturing sector, or in the lower service sector, and whether the labour market is "segmented" or not. Entering the "protected" and unionized industrial sector or the "unprotected" tertiary one will have important effects on the migrant group's position in the class structure and on whether they can make use of class resources or not. Secondly, it is important to analyze the "reproductive structures", that is the nature of the housing market, both private and public, and the bureaucratic entitlements for access to the latter, as well as of other "urban goods", i.e. the nature of "collective consumption" (cf. Castells 1976, 1977; Dunleavy 1980). Concerning the (migrant) "ethnic group", size, sex-ratio and age structures are important. The first affects the possibility of face-to-face contacts and interaction, even if only to a certain extent, as it is difficult to establish a threshold above which these social relations start to decline. The second and third affect, more crucially, the possibility of endogamous marriage. These three factors will be influenced by the nature of the migratory process, which in turn will also affect the group's incorporation in economic (employment) and reproductive (especially housing) niches due to the "chain effect" of the migratory network, within the

broad constraints imposed by the context. The relationship between the ethnic group and the "host society" can be characterized in these terms, as "ethnic division of labour" and "ethnic division of reproduction", which will entail specific patterns of conflict, cooperation, or alliance, in the two different spheres. However, while it is obvious that conflicts in the area of production (class conflict) and conflicts in the area of reproduction ("urban social movements") (cf. Castells 1983) are frequent also within the "host society" itself, they are also possible, albeit to a lesser extent, within a particular ethnic group (1).

Looking at the cultural aspects, one has first to distinguish between culture, identity and ideology (cf. also chapter 1). Not all of those aspects that make up the "culture" of a group also make up its "identity". In other words the first category is wider than the second. Moreover "culture", as a system of meaning and world-view, should be distinguished analytically from "ideology", as a distortion of social reality to justify existing inequalities, although in practice it is not always easy to do so. Finally, while it is possible to have various competing cultural discourses in the "host society", some hegemonic and some subordinate, but all "legitimate", making it difficult to employ the notion of identity in this case, also in the "ethnic group" there may be competing ideologies, but the identity tends to be more homogeneous. It has already been seen that, concerning the "ethnic group", the strength of identity is affected by the demographic structure, among other things. However it is important to analyze the content of its culture

and the degree to which it overlaps with identity. For example, a live nationalist cause and an ethnically specific religion, might help to cause a greater ethnic solidarity, than, for example, common origin per se and a universalist religion, as argued in this thesis. On the other hand, aspects of what can be recognized as part of a group's culture, but not of its identity, might be important in case of a redefinition of the latter. Secondly it is important to characterize the content of the culture and identity of the ethnic group as well as that of the "host society", because it will affect the extent to which the group will be able to understand and "play" the politics of the latter and the kind of "ethnic resources" it will be able to use. This means that the character of a group's culture is not neutral in its social effects. For example, the Christianity and radicalism of Eritreans fits the Milanese context much better than Islam or the common origin of the Egyptians.

Concerning the relationship between the two collectivities in terms of culture, one must distinguish between situations in which the direction of the relationship is from the ethnic group to the "host society" and vice versa. The first situation can be characterized employing Cohen's (1969, 1974a, 1974b) notion of "cultural strategy", not in his sense of a process always involving the stressing of a group's cultural distinctiveness, but in the sense of a particular presentation of the group's cultural formation vis a vis the "host society". This presentation may involve a certain degree of manipulation of the group's identity, stressing the

group's distinctiveness or concealing it, as it has been shown with respect to Eritreans and Egyptians.

As Cohen (1974a) stresses, it is very difficult to separate "cultural strategies" from the political aspects of the group. According to the above framework, they must be related to the presence or absence and to the character of "ethnic institutions, leadership and organization", that is to the political characteristics of the "ethnic group. These allow not only for the maintenance and reproduction of identity, but also for the articulation of informal political power. In this respect they correspond to the political parties and organizations of the "host society" but with a lack of formal power and a greater reliance on informal organization. Thus one can hypothesize that those groups whose "ethnic institutions" and leadership can either articulate internal trading networks (e.g. the Ibadan Hausa) or a network of political links with the "host society" (e.g. the Milanese Eritreans) will adopt "cultural strategies" stressing distinctiveness. On the other hand, ethnic groups without ethnic institutions (enjoying resources), will down-play their distinctiveness and seek social enhancement at an individual level. The different relationship this entails with the "host society" can be characterized as "usurpatory practices", following Parkin's (1979) notion of "social closure". For example, Eritreans aim to obtain the status of political refugees as a group, while Egyptians aim to acquire Italian nationality as individuals.

This also has important effects at the economic level

countering the lack of class resources in order to overcome a subordinate position within the ethnic division of labour and reproduction. Thus Eritreans managed to overcome, to some extent, disadvantages mainly in the field of social reproduction (housing, health, education, socialization) as a group, making use of the network of contacts between their leaders and some organizations of the "host society". On the other hand the Egyptians managed to obtain these and other resources mainly through intermarriage, but this has so far applied only to a minority of its population. Finally, the Ibadan Hausa (Cohen 1969) were able to make use of cultural and political strategies as a group in order to manage an essentially internal trading network, but not to obtain the resources the Eritreans did through their contacts with the host society. This relationship between "cultural strategies" and "usurpatory" political practices can be defined as "ethnicity". It has important effects not only in the socioeconomic field, as argued above, but in reproducing loyalties to leaders (thus allowing one to speak of "ethnic brokerage") and the legitimacy such leaders derive from the kind of identity they represent (e.g. religious or political).

Finally, the relationship between the ethnic group and the "host society" can be examined from the point of view of the latter. The interplay between "cultural strategies" and "usurpatory practices" can be defined as "ethnicity" from the point of view of the ethnic group. Similarly, the interplay between the "host society's" ideological stereotypes and discriminatory practices (domination and exclusion) towards

the ethnic group(s) can be defined as "racism", even though some authors (cf. Miles 1982) prefer to confine this term to the ideological sphere. The ideological stereotypification by certain sections of the "host society" may distinguish between various (minority) ethnic groups or not, also depending on the length of immigration. It may be constructed in biological terms, as in the "classical" racist ideology, or more in cultural ones. This in turn will depend on the ideological legacy of the attitude towards "the other" and on the degree of conflict at the socioeconomic level. This conflict may be determined, for instance, by competition over employment, or over items of social reproduction, as in the Milanese case. At the political level this entails examining the degree to which the system of legal and bureaucratic rules that regulate immigration relegates migrants (or ex-migrants) to subordinate categories of employment, housing, etc., and excludes them (formally or informally) from the political system. Whereas ethnic groups attempt to alter their subordinate status through cultural strategies and usurpatory practices, the "host society" attempts to keep its dominant position through ideological stereotypes and exclusionary practices. The experience of domination, generational conflict and different attitudes and expectations from the "host society" may lead to an "identity transformation" in the second generation, as with young Eritreans in Milan tending towards a Rastafarian/Abyssinian identity, some elements of which were already part of their culture.

To conclude two points must be reiterated. First the "boxes" of Figure 9.2 should not be seen as fixed categories, but, in the language of "structuration" theory (cf. Giddens 1976, 1985), as systems of reproduced practices constraining human agency. This means that practices can be analyzed only in specific situations that will determine the specific content of each "box". Secondly, the adjective "ethnic" is used only to denote a group conceiving itself as sharing a common origin and sense of history, that is culturally different (in linguistic, religious, or other terms) from the population with which it is interacting.

In summary, the comparative approach adopted in this thesis has indicated several points for the study of urban ethnic politics, by means of a case study of Eritreans and Egyptians in Milan. In a situation of exclusion from the Italian class structure and from formal political power, culture becomes an integral part of a migrant ethnic minority's struggle to enhance its social position. At times, this "usurpatory cultural strategy" involves making use of cultural distinctiveness and articulating the group's interests in order to obtain resources not only in the economic field but also in that of social reproduction. At other times, it involves concealment and social enhancement pursued at an individual level, e.g. through intermarriage. While different demographic characteristics and the character of identity help to explain these processes, the crucial factor is the presence of ethnic leadership and political institutions that can make use of "ethnic resources" within the exclusionary constraints of the "host society".

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

(1) Cf. Katznelson (1982) for a good analysis of the separation of conflict in the productive sphere from that in the domestic one, in relation to ethnicity in New York

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Il Manifesto (radical);
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La Stampa (centrist-bourgeois);
L'Unità (Communist Party);
Reporter (progressive);

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